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2025**



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**DURING 41st ALL INDIA ROSE CONVENTION
AT Jamshedpur
29th to 31st Devenber 2024**

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FRONT COVER ROSE INFORMATION

**(Which will be officially released in
honour of Sir Ratan Tata)**

Rose Name	:	Sir Ratan Tata
Bread by	:	Sanjay Mukherjee (2024)
India Colour	:	White or Near White
Type	:	Hybrid Tea
Foliage	:	Medium Green slightly shiny
Height	:	3 to 4.5 ft
Petals Count	:	40 to 45
Size	:	4 5 in
Parentage	:	MonaLisa x white success

Attractive shape and large very full (41+ petals), High centered bloom form, Can be used for beds and borders, cut flower or garden, pot culture born mostly Solitary, upright growth habit, very disease resistant

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BACK COVER ROSE INFORMATION

Rose Name	:	The Viru Rose
In memory of	:	M S Viraraghavan
Bred by	:	Sourav Mitra (2018) India
Colour	:	White with Pink Edge
Type	:	Hybrid Tea
Foliage	:	Medium Green slight y shiny
Height	:	3 to 4 ft
Petals Count	:	35 to 45
Size	:	4.5 in
Parentage	:	Gemini x Moonstone

Attractive shape and large very full (35+petals), high centered bloom form, Can be used for beds and borders, cut flower or garden , pot culture born mostly Solitary, bushy growth habit, very disease resistant

Conventions of IRF	Year	Place	Organizers
1 st Convention	January 1978	Bombay	Bombay Rose Society
2 nd Convention	January 1979	Jabalpur	Rose Society of Jabalpur
3 rd Convention	December 1979	Jairpur	Rose Society of Rajasthan
4 th Convention	January 1983	Pune	Rose Society of Pune
5 th Convention	January 1984	Bhopal	M. P Rose Society
6 th Convention	January 1985	Ranchi	Rose Society of Ranchi
7 th Convention	January 1987	Hyderabad	Hyderabad Rose Society
8 th Convention	January 1988	Nagpur	Vidharba Rose Society
9 th Convention	December 1988	Lucknow	U. P. Rose Society
10 th Convention	January 1990	Pune	Rose Society of Pune Mumbai Rose Society Maharashtra Rose Society
11 th Convention	January 1991	Calcutta	Bengal Rose Society
12 th Convention	January 1992	Baroda	Baroda Horticulture Society
13 th Convention	January 1993	Jamshedpur	Jamshedpur Horticulture Society
14 th Convention	January 1995	Ranchi	Rose Society of Ranchi
15 th Convention	January 1996	Indore	Malwa Rose Society
16 th Convention	January 1998	Jamshedpur	Jamshedpur Horticulture Society
Asian Regional Convention of WFRS	January 1999	Jairpur	Rose Society of Rajasthan
17 th Convention	January 1999	Jairpur	Rose Society of Rajasthan
18 th Convention	December 1999	New Delhi	Rose Society of India
19 th Convention	January 2001	Hyderabad	Hyderabad Rose Society
20 th Convention	January 2002	Bangalore	Rose Society of Karnataka
21 st Convention	January 2003	Nagpur	Vidharba Rose Society
22 nd Convention	January 2004	Bhopal	M. P Rose Society
23 rd Convention	January 2005	Kolkata	Bengal Rose Society
24 th Convention	January 2006	Bhubaneswar	Orissa Rose Society
25 th Convention	January 2007	Pune	Rose Society of Pune

Conventions of IRF	Year	Place	Organizers
26 th Convention	January 2008	Indore	Malwa Rose Society
27 th Convention	January 2009	Ooty	Nilgiris Rose Society
28 th Convention	January 2010	Mumbai	Mumbai Rose Society
29 th Convention	January 2011	Amravati	Amravati Garden Club
30 th Convention	January 2012	Jamshedpur	Jamshedpur Horticulture Society
31 st Convention	January 2013	Jabalpur	Rose Society of Jabalpur
32 nd Convention	January 2014	Bhopal	M. P Rose Society
World Regional Conference of WFRS	November 2014	Hyderabad	Hyderabad Rose Society
33 rd Convention	November 2014	Hyderabad	Hyderabad Rose Society
34 th Convention	January 2016	Pune	Maharashtra Rose Society
35 th Convention	January 2017	Kolkata	Bengal Rose Society
36 th Convention	December 2017	Vijaywada	Andhra Rose Society
37 th Convention	January 2019	Hyderabad	Hyderabad Rose Society
World Regional Conference of WFRS	January 2020	Kolkata	Agr Horticulture Society Ltd
38 th Convention	January 2020	Kolkata	Agr Horticulture Society Ltd. Bengal Rose Society
39th Convention	December 2022	Pune	The Rose Society of Pune 60 years Celebration
40th Convention	January 2024	Bhubaneswar	Rose Society of Orissa

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Dear Friends,

I am very happy to note that Horticulture Society of Jamshedpur is hosting the All India Rose Convention, I wish you all a very Happy New Year-2025

Wishing the delegates and Members of HSJ, attending the 41st Convention and Rose Show Convention, a productive visit, rose is considered as the King of flowers throughout the world, it is also known to be the ambassador of Peace, Love, Joy and Friendship globally We have to stride ahead in popularizing the rose with liveliness, so that its fragrance paves the path of brotherhood and bonding.

With warm Wishes
Thanking You, I remain,
Yours Truly,
[Ahmed Alam Khan](#)



President's Message

Dear Members,

I am very pleased to note that Horticulture Society of Jamshedpur is hosting the 41st All India Rose Convention. I wish the Society and delegates a successful Convention and Rose Show.

In the last two years we have had very successful meetings and I am proud that the Members of the Governing Council have been prompt in attending the meetings, various Committees have been formed and are working Independently. I take this opportunity to wish you all and your family a very happy, healthy prosperous New Year 2025 and also thank you for reposing faith in me, my endeavour is to make the Indian Rose Federation a strong, Professional and Transparent body of Indian Rose Lovers.

Regards

Sanyogitadevi Dhanwatay

President

Indian Rose Federation



Editor's Page

We are pleased to present this 39th Edition of the Indian Rose Annual on the occasion of 40th Annual Rose Convention of the Indian Rose Federation (IRF), being organised by Horticultural Society, Jamshedpur, from 29th to 31st December 2024, at Tulsi Bhavan, Bistupur, Steel City of India, Jamshedpur. However, the pleasure is laced with a sense of grief, due to the passing away of Mr M S Viru Viraraghavan (MSV), a founder member of the IRF and one of our illustrious and globally revered and loved rose breeders on 20th December 2023. As a tribute to the unforgettable man and his pioneering work, we are bringing out this year's Annual as "M.S Viraraghavan Commemorative Volume."

MSV was actively involved in initiating the idea of starting the publication of a journal by the Federation to be called Indian Rose Annual (IRA,) proposed to be released at every IRF convention. It would include general articles on rose culture, research in roses and reports of activities and future projects of the Federation. It was only natural that MSV became a pivotal member of the editorial committee of the journal for as many as 40 years, right from Vol. 4 (1983) to Vol. 35 (2023) along with Mrs Girija Viraraghavan. Actually the couple has been synonymous with the Indian Rose Annual, which set a high standard of excellence.

MSV began his celebrated work on using indigenous species roses in rose breeding in the late 1970's and we are very proud that all of his work was published in the Indian Rose Annuals. Almost every issue of IRA would contain a paper by him, most of the time on the progress of his breeding work, though it could have been published in any top journal in botany or horticulture. His papers transformed IRA into a highly rated journal of its field.

When the idea of this commemorative issue was discussed, the Editorial Committee felt that this kind of project would not be possible without the experience, expertise, guidance and blessings of Mrs Girija Viraraghavan. We are deeply grateful to her for agreeing to be a part of

this endeavour, as the Consulting Editor actually, the mentor.

This issue consists of different sections as described below.

1. Memories and work of MSV :

- A. Write ups (many accompanied by photographs) in memory of and tribute to MSV, invited from all over the world from a wide spectrum of personalities who knew him well, have been his friends and are intimately connected with the world of roses. As we had expected, the response has been overwhelming to say the least. It is revealing how much universal admiration, respect and love MSV and Gurja commanded. The amazing list of more than 75 contributors includes most of the contemporary, well known and celebrated names in the rose world today. It includes top rose breeders, rose society presidents and prominent members of rose organizations all over the world, rose lovers and friends - a veritable "Who's Who" of the rose world.
- B. List of papers published by MSV in the Indian Rose Annual that underlies his outstanding and painstaking research.
- C. A seminal paper by MSV published in IRA has been reprinted. The paper introduces his thought process and plan of work.
- D. Alphabetical List of Roses released by MSV.

2. Invited articles on rose culture : Most of them are on rose breeding by prominent breeders, both foreign and Indian, sharing their work.

3. Regular features including :

- i. Past Presidents of IRF : This year's piece is in remembrance of Dr.P.S Rao, the second President of IRF, a great physician and a keen rosarian who did so much for the progress of the Federation. We are extremely happy that it has been contributed by none other than Mrs. P S Rao. We are extremely grateful to her for the kind gesture
- ii. From IRA Archives (Down Memory Lane) : A collection of photos of selected pages from IRA Vol. 3. 1983.
- iii. Reports of yearly activities of Rose Societies affiliated to IRF : The present Convention is the fourth one (after 1993, 1998, 2012) being organised at Jamshedpur by Horticultural Society, Jamshedpur and Tata Steel UISIL, and sponsored by Tata Steel

Ltd. I have no doubt that the convention, being organised by such an outstanding and devoted team under the dynamic leadership of Mrs. Sumita Nupur, the President of the Organising Committee, would be as highly successful and memorable for its grandeur as the earlier conventions. Our good wishes to them.

Finally, on behalf of the Editorial Committee, I welcome all the delegates and rose lovers and extend greetings and good wishes to them for the new year 2025.

N V Shastri

Chief Editor

Note

Girja Viraraghavan

I am immensely touched by the tributes and memories written by our friends in India and across the world to whom I had written requesting them to spare time to speak about their reminiscences of Viru. I am most grateful to the Indian Rose Federation, and the editors of the Indian Rose Annual, Dr N V Shastri, Arshad Bhiwandiwalla and Arun Patil, whose idea it was of bringing out the 2025 Indian Rose Annual in his memory – he who was a founder member of the IRF and its editor for over thirty five years. Reading friends' remembrances of him, highlighting certain aspects of his character, recalling certain incidents which touched them, gives me solace and comfort. Knowing that Indian rose breeders like Dr N.V. Shastri and Sanjoy Mukherjee are carrying forward his work by using Viru's hybrids, which he had bred from Indian rose species, gives me great happiness, as that was what he had always wanted – that his work should be the foundation on which other young breeders could build.

My family and I thank you all



M S. 'Viru' Viraraghavan
(This could be in early pages of
the annual, the Frontispiece)



A Common Pose – Looking at a Rose



Checking out his rose seedlings, 2018



**In Gardening
apron**



**Taking Pollen to
make a rose cross**



**On a botanical expedition,
Mt Abu Rajasthan, 1982**



Virus ready to spray his roses 2019



At one of his many lectures, Hyderabad 2014



Judging at a rose show



In his library, 2019



'Legendary Virus Sir' bred by Sanjoy Mukherjee



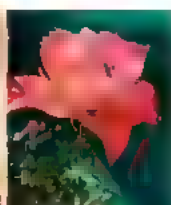
Planting a rose, Government Rose Garden, Kodaikana, 2016



Virus relaxing in Loseley Park, UK. 2014 Credit Billy West



His last lecture, Brussels Belgium at the 15th World Heritage Rose Conference, June 2023



'The Virus Rose' bred by Saurav Mitra

A Life in Bloom

The Journey of a Distinguished Rose Lover and Cardiologist

Mrs. Joya P S Rao
Hyderabad



Dr Pinnamaneni Satyanarayana Rao was a distinguished cardiologist and professor whose passion for roses was unparalleled. As President of the Indian Rose Federation, he cultivated and expanded a community of rose growers across the nation.

Throughout his career, Dr. P. S. Rao championed innovative medical education and fostered a culture of excellence amongst both students and faculty. He served as the Dean of the Faculty of Medicine at Osmania University. He was an active member of the Medical

Council of India and served on the Executive Council of the University of Health Sciences in Andhra Pradesh. Dr P S Rao received several accolades in recognition of his outstanding contributions to Cardiology and his dedication to teaching. He was awarded World Health Organization Fellowships in Cardiology in Denmark and London. In England, he was elected to the International Medical Sciences Academy for his contributions for the advancement of medical sciences. His lifelong commitment to mentorship and patient care was unwavering. It was due to this compassion and commitment that Dr P.S. Rao was awarded the B C Roy Award for the Development of the Specialty of Cardiology.

His interest in roses began in his childhood and soon became a lifelong appreciation for the beauty of roses. It was this enduring enthusiasm for roses that inspired him to join the Indian Rose Federation over 50 years ago. Dr P S Rao and like-minded rose enthusiasts founded the Hyderabad Rose Society in 1975. He served as President for many years, growing the Hyderabad Rose Society's membership and impact. Dr P S Rao was integral in establishing the Hyderabad Rose Show and organized the first show at Hotel Sarovar in January 1977. More than 100 competitors showcased over 1,000 stunning roses in various forms, drawing the attention of over 3,000 rose enthusiasts. The Hyderabad Rose Show became an immediate sensation, attracting attendees from across the country. The

Hyderabad Rose Show became a national gathering, uniting rose aficionados from diverse backgrounds in a celebration of nature's splendor

He served as President of the Indian Rose Federation from 1985 to 1988 and was awarded the Indian Rose Federation gold medal in 1992. It was under his leadership that Hyderabad hosted its first All India Rose Convention. He represented the Hyderabad Rose Society at the World Federation of Rose Societies World Rose Convention in Australia. He was a global ambassador for roses, championing their beauty and significance worldwide.

Dr. P.S. Rao was passionate about sharing his love for roses with others. For decades, he invited rose enthusiasts to tour his impressive garden and learn the intricacies of rose cultivation. He spent hours sharing his expertise on grafting and propagation, fostering a greater appreciation for the artistry of roses and nature alike. His expertise and extensive knowledge of roses were truly legendary. He generously shared plants that now thrive in gardens all across India.

Dr. P.S. Rao passed away on November 10, 2020. His legacy endures in the love of roses he inspired in others. The passion and knowledge he imparted have taken root in the hearts of those he touched, encouraging new generations to appreciate the beauty of nature. Through each rose, his spirit remains, reminding everyone of the joy he brought to gardening and the community.

Uncle Viru

Ahmad Alam Khan
President Emeritus Indian Rose Federation
Past Vice President, Central Asia, WFRS
Hyderabad, Telangana



Viru Viraraghavan is a name synonymous with roses, not only in India but globally 'Uncle Viru' as my family and I called him, was a close associate of my father, the late Nawab Shah Alam Khan. Uncle Viru was one of the founder members of the Hyderabad Rose Society and was actively involved in its work. Roses were his passion, a highly educated persona, he left his plum job

in the Indian Administrative Service for his obsession with roses. I often used to sit and hear the conversations he used to have with my father, about his adventures of locating wild roses, for the purpose of rose breeding, travelling to various places in India, from South to North, East to West, leaving no stone unturned. Success ultimately came after long journeys. *Rosa clinophylla* was found, leading to his breeding with it. His aspiration was to create roses for warmer climates and he succeeded, creating beautiful varieties, which are now growing in India and abroad. Next was *Rosa gigantea*, which he found in the north eastern belt, paving the way for some of the best and strongest varieties. Uncle was closely associated with the Indian Rose Federation, he was the Chief Editor for almost 35 years, his articles on rose research were marvellous, which nobody in the world could contest nor find any flaws with. He was revered by scientists such as Dr. B. P. Pal of India. He was the first Indian to be given the 'Great Rosarians of the World' award by the Huntington Library and Gardens, California USA. When he came



back my father threw a party in his honour, since my father treated him like his younger brother. It was a grand affair, in attendance were IAS officers, judges, politicians, police bigwigs, friends and relatives to greet the great personality. He was always very soft spoken and smiling. He will always be remembered through the legacy of roses he has created for the world, growing in many gardens, swirling along with the winds. The nation's rose lovers salute you, Uncle.

Grieving at the Demise of Viru Viraraghavan, A Great Rose Expert of the World

Akira Ogawa

Past Vice President WFRS Far East

Japan



Viru's lecture at the Osaka World Convention, entitled "New Frontiers in Rose Breeding the Evergreen Roses", also left an indelible impression on the audience. As a breeder working in a hot climate area, he discussed how to raise roses suited to such a climate. His aims were to raise evergreen, fragrant, disease resistant roses giving beautiful flowers, using both species

and cultivars, and displayed many slides of such roses he had so far raised. I myself had never thought of evergreen roses, and hoped to see such roses somewhere in rose gardens in Japan.

In the same year, my friend Katsuhiko Maebara opened a new rose garden in Sakura, a pastoral city near Tokyo, with a long history. This garden, the City of Sakura Rose Garden, displays 2,500 rose plants of over 1,000 species and varieties in 15 sections. One of those sections is named "Dreams of India" and displays 80 varieties of roses raised by Viru. Katsuhiko had been profoundly impressed by Viru's breeding work, and decided to allocate a section to his roses. An interesting feature of this section is that some of the varieties planted there are named after rose experts in Japan. 'Maebara's Dream', 'Blushing Yuki', after Yuki Mikanagi, a noted rose researcher from Japan, 'Nobuo Shirasuna, Landscaper Supreme', 'Mikunori Ogisu, Plantsman Extraordinaire' and 'Rose Legend Akira Ogawa'. I was greatly humbled by the rose named for me.

By this time, Viru, Girija, and I had become good friends, and I had come to obtain valuable information on roses from them by exchanging letters and e-mails with them.

In 2012, the WFRS Heritage Rose Conference was hosted by Sakura City, and Viru was invited to this conference again as one of the lecturers. Here he gave a lecture entitled “Sustainable Rose Growing – the Indian Dream”, and discussed how to raise roses suited to hot climates, using *Rosa chinophylla*, *R. gigantea*, etc. as their parents, and talked about his dream of creating evergreen roses and tree-like roses like *R. hirtula* native to Japan. Here again, his lecture using many slides showing beautiful roses he had raised left indelible impressions on all the audience. On the post conference tour, we visited Hakone, where our guests from abroad were able to see *R. hirtula* giving beautiful flowers.

In May 2019, after attending the WFRS Regional Rose Conference held in Nanyang, China, Viru and Girja came to Sakura once again. Katsuhiko had asked Viru to give a lecture on roses for rose lovers living in the Sakura and Tokyo areas. Though it was not a lecture program scheduled by a national rose society, a large number of rose lovers, not just from the Sakura and Tokyo areas, but some from Hokkaido, the northern-most main island, filled the huge lecture hall in the city museum. After the lecture, Viru, Girja, and the audience visited the City of Sakura Rose Garden, and admired historic roses there, then in full bloom, including those in the “Dreams of India” section, and took a commemorative photo under the arch in the open space of the garden.

After the rose event ended, Katsuhiko and I took them in his car to the hotel they were staying. Since I had to leave Sakura and return home that day, I said goodbye to them at the gate of the hotel. I felt extremely sad, since I knew that it was the parting that would prove to be the last one, since, as an octogenarian, I knew that I would not be able to attend a large rose event to be held in and out of Japan, and believed that I would say good-bye to this world before them.

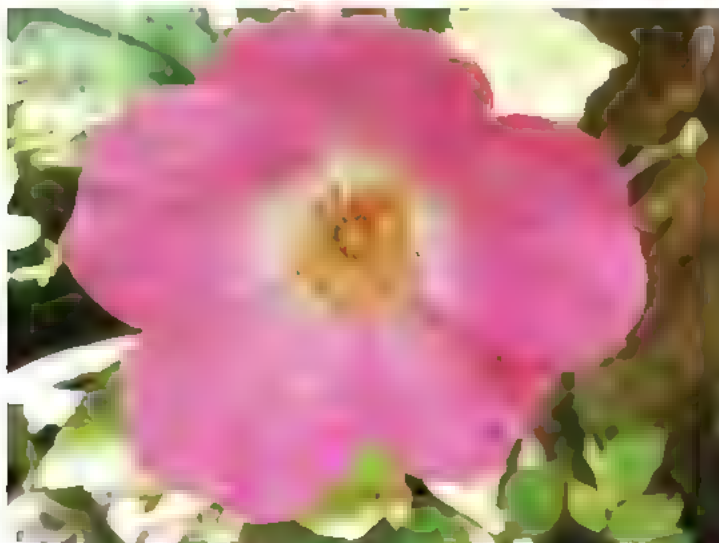
Sadly, what I thought then turned out to be true, not because I said goodbye to this world before they did, but unexpectedly Viru did first. I feel extremely sad, not just because I cannot see him anymore, but also because we, the rose lovers of the world, are no longer able to obtain valuable information on roses he would have provided for us, and because many unique and valuable roses he would have introduced to the rose world might be lost. I hope that Girja will take over his work, and complete what he had planned as much as she can.

It was fortunate that Viru and Girja were able to publish a book entitled *Roses in the Fire of Spring* just one year before Viru passed away. This is a wonderful book which tells us in detail how Viru had raised roses in his unique way while working for a local government office in different areas in India, how he and Girja had visited different countries and exchanged information on roses with rose lovers there. It also gives the list of roses he had raised. I consider that even

readers who have not met the authors will learn a lot about roses, and will be deeply impressed by their enthusiasm and effort to promote international friendship among rose lovers of different countries of the world.

I consider that Viru, now in a world different from ours, is strolling among evergreen roses or resting under a tree like rose

Viru, the beautiful roses you raised will be admired by rose lovers of the world for many generations to come The valuable information on roses you provided for us will be cherished and handed down from generation to generation. Thank you indeed, Viru. Please rest in peace



Rose Legend Akira Ogawa

Tribute to Viru

Anita Clevenger
Vice President, Heritage Rose Foundation, USA
Sacramento Historic Rose Garden
California USA



My first acquaintance with Viru and Giriya Viraraghavan was when they were recognized as Great Rosarians of the World™ at the Huntington Garden and Library's annual lecture in 2006 in San Marino, CA. Since the lecture series' inception in 2001, California's Gold Coast Heritage Rose Group

members had made an annual pilgrimage to hear the legendary rosarians who had written many of our reference books, including Peter Beales, Roger Phillips/Martyn Rix, and Jack Harkness. This year, the honorees were unfamiliar to us. Who were the Viraraghavans, and how in the world did we pronounce their names?

Clair Martin, then curator of the Huntington Rose Garden and founder of lecture series, had trouble pronouncing their name, too. But he was aware that Viru's breeding efforts had hit the world of roses like a bombshell: what if species roses native to semi-tropical climates were used in breeding programs to develop garden roses that would thrive in warm climates? Roses bred for European climates needed winter chill, as we California rose lovers know to our chagrin. Once-blooming Old Garden Roses often fail to bloom at all, and the plants often dwindle away. Tea, China and Noisette roses thrived, as did Hybrid Musks and Polyanthas, but other classes of roses, especially modern Hybrid Teas, developed

disease without constant care and use of toxic chemicals. Most rose breeders were interbreeding roses from the same limited genetic lines. Would Viru's innovative roses be suitable for California, and for warming climates throughout the world?

Viru's lecture spoke of his rose breeding efforts, including intrepid journeys to find *R. gigantea* and *R. chinophylla* in the wild. He did not lecture alone. Girija joined him, talking about roses in India's past, while he spoke of the present and future. Their obvious love and respect for one another and for the rose were compelling. The Gold Coast Rose group always invited the lecturers to dinner at a local Mexican restaurant. Would Viru and Girija join us? Yes, they would. Hilarity and friendships ensued.

At the dinner, talk turned to another curious, creative rose breeder, Ralph Moore. We Gold Coasters usually stopped at his nursery to visit. Ralph was nearly 100 years old. Would Viru like to meet him? As described in their book, *Roses in the Fire of Spring*, we hastily arranged transportation. All of us were thrilled to see the two trailblazing rose breeders with heads bent together.

Over the years, there were other opportunities for us to meet again, whether in California, at other GROW events, or at World Federation of Rose Societies' conferences in France, Japan and Belgium. Always, there were warm greetings, laughter, and new things to learn and see. I especially treasured seeing *R. hirtula* in its native setting in Japan. It was raining, but Viru's enthusiasm and interest were undampened.

Also in Japan, I had the opportunity of seeing Viru's roses in the Sakura Rose Garden. It was such an honor to walk with him and see them growing, not just as photos in a lecture hall. If only Viru could have joined me in Helga Brichet's Italian garden where his Hybrid Giganteas draped over old olive trees and graced the lunch table. In my home garden, 'Aussie Sixer', an apricot tea rose, reminds me of him as well as the legendary "Tea Ladies" of Perth, Australia.

Rose gatherings are moveable feasts of friendship and rosy conversation. We'd make new friends and renew continuing relationships. When I would meet them around the world, I was aware that many others also considered Viru and Girija to be their special friends. It seemed that everybody would rush to greet them excitedly. Much as I wanted them to myself, I'd force myself to step aside to let

others take their turn but was always delighted when I had them to myself. I will always treasure us walking together last year in Brussels, walking to the conference site. We talked of many things, including my wish to visit them in India. Girija's words were, sadly, prophetic "You should come NOW! WE ARE NOT YOUNG!"

Indeed, a few months later, Viru was gone. But his roses, and the memories of his lectures and friendships, live on.



Anita's Rosy Smile

Viru, a Fragrant Rose

Arshad Bhiwandiwalla

Hon. Treasurer, Indian Rose Federation

Mumbai Maharashtra

I first met the couple 'Viraraghavans' at the First All India Rose Convention in 1978 at the Police Club, Bombay (as Mumbai was then called) where the convention had been organised. I had been assigned as a volunteer by the senior rosarians of the event, to welcome the many in-coming delegates, guiding them into the hall where the inauguration was to take place. Mr P K Menon, who was the Chief Editor of BRS (Bombay Rose Society) Bulletins, guided me about the top luminaries - Dr B P Pal, Mr Viru Viraraghavan, Mrs Guriya Viraraghavan, Mr J P Agarwal, Mr Kastanrangan. I already knew Mr Ramrao Jagtap and Mr. Suresh Pingale. I then had the opportunity of meeting them all, these top rosarians of the country, at the Rose Show which was held at C J Hall. Viru Uncle, as I called him, the soft spoken person that he was, inquired about the number of roses I was growing and the varieties, and then, in just one single sentence he softly told me not to discontinue my passion for roses, but to always find time for them despite my other concerns and jobs. After this 1978 convention, Uncle visited Mumbai (Bombay) quite a number of times, to attend the B. R. S. Rose Shows, sometimes as a Judge, or as Guest of Honour or Chief Guest. On all these occasions our interaction grew, and I came to know him well.



Spirited discussion on roses, Jamshedpur, 2012



As Guest of Honour Mumbai



**Bombay Rose Society Show
with Arshad on right**

A highly respected gentleman, both in India and the outside world, Viru Uncle was associated with roses since his youth and there was no turning point for him, away from roses, and this continued till his last breath. Meeting him often at rose conventions across the country and speaking at length with him was a delight and always fruitful. One learnt something new each time. My association with him and Auntie Girja grew, when I became a member of the Editorial Committee of IRF, when they were the editors of the Indian Rose Annual, often speaking on the phone, or corresponding by letters. He was the person who encouraged and guided me to start the IRF Bulletin, which I did and he was very happy about it, he told me that such interactions will keep the rose family bonded. I well remember in 2012, at the Jamshedpur rose convention, where a discussion took place with Viru Uncle and Kasturi Uncle heading the debate -it was about apricot roses. The discussion started with 'Valencia' then went on with 'Just Joey', 'Old Timer', and many other roses in this colour range - nearly three hours were spent and all of us felt that the spirited discussion should have gone on indefinitely. All of us, sitting around in a circle listening eagerly to the words of wisdom flowing from these stalwarts felt really blessed. I have yet to come across a person having so much knowledge on roses - he was a living encyclopaedia on roses, the only Indian known globally for his research and knowledge of roses. India, and the world will miss him, but I believe he is still there, east, west, north, south, his fragrance of a rose emanating from gardens or in the wild mountains.

The Rose Family Salutes You

Memories of my dear friend Viru Viraraghavan His simplicity was his greatness

Arun Patil

Chairman Rose Show, Rose Society of Pune
Past Secretary Indian Rose Federation 2006-9
Pune Maharashtra



With Arun Patil

I am in awe of Viru Viraraghavan and his work in bringing the sub-continental species of roses into the bloodline of modern roses. For me it was something unfathomable, but seeing his work, it made me understand the complexities of the hybridization process, from species roses to modern roses.

I was a hobby rose grower and eventually became a commercial rose nursery man. Talking with Viru increased my knowledge manifold. He was so simple and encouraging, despite being so erudite, and appreciated my work. I always admired his simplicity and his down to earth behaviour.

Early association started a friendship that flourished to become a family connection which continued to grow. Since the 2007 Rose Convention visit, he and Girija started regular visits to my home in Pune. They used to like our simple food and oftentimes avoided grand dinners at the convention to spend time with us. My wife Saroj, and Girija had a sisterly bond and enjoyed exchanging personal pleasantries and gifts.

During one such get together in Pune, Mr Kasturirangan (owner of the famous KSG Nurseries, Bangalore) was also in Pune. We went to the Kas Plateau, near Satara. This place is famous for wildflowers and extends to several kilometers during the monsoon season and is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Viru and Kasturirangan shared their deep knowledge on several wild species of flowers we saw. This encouraged me to write a series of articles with pictures in the daily Marathi newspaper, *Agrowon*. Viru and Girija later also encouraged me to write

for the Indian Rose Annual on my work on growing organic roses with Effective Microorganisms (EM) solution.

Our family friendship and personal connections encouraged Viru and Girija to stay in our home whenever they visited Pune. These times were really very memorable. We used to spend late evenings with pleasantries and discussed many topics beyond serious talk about roses. Sometimes, my daughter and my cousin, who live in the US, would also join in, when they were visiting Pune.

During the Kolkata convention, in 2016, Girija asked us to join a personal tour of the Sundarbans (a mangrove forest and National Park, home of the Royal Bengal Tiger) she was arranging with her school friends. My wife and I immediately agreed and Girija made all the reservations for us. Viru and Girija arranged a wonderful stay for us at The Saturday Club, Kolkata. This tour allowed me to see another aspect of Viru's personality. He and Girija were like a caring family to me and they never hesitated to pamper me. We were on a three day boat trip in the Sundarbans delta, where three rivers meet the Bay of Bengal, and I really wanted to eat fresh fish. Even though Girija was a strict vegetarian and our boat was not a fishing one, they didn't think twice. Viru gladly entertained my whims for a fresh fish meal by arranging fish from surrounding fishing boats. For them, I was simply a young man who should be pampered. My wife was a little annoyed by this behavior of mine but in the end we all had a lot of fun.

We were always together when we could meet and when away, we would often talk on the phone to wish each other well.

The December 2022 convention at Pune gave us another chance to be together. This time my daughter, Sonali, was also with us and we would enjoy ourselves engrossed in conversations late into the evenings. These are a few moments in our lives that were made precious just by Viru's simple presence. My wife was not keeping well those days, but his reassuring presence helped her feel better and she enjoyed every moment.

Again in September 2023 Viru and Girija visited Pune to inaugurate their book *Roses in the Fire of Spring*. We had another chance to host them at our home. Even after they left, the pleasantries continued over the telephone. Girija and Viru used to often ask about my wife's health.

It was a big shock to both of us to receive the news of Viru's departure from this earth. We could not assimilate this tragedy and were in grief for a long time. Since my wife was also unwell, I could not leave Pune to visit Girija to convey my condolences. I still feel that sadness whenever I visit my rose farm. He was a towering personality in the rose world, but I also lost a good friend, who always inspired me with his simplicity and affection.

Remembering Mr. Viraraghavan

Arvind Sable

Past President, Indian Rose Federation
Nagpur, Maharashtra

I have been associated with Mr Viraraghavan from the very first meeting of the Indian Rose Federation held in Bombay in 1978. He was the very first rosarian from India who carried out research work on species roses found in our country. His basic idea was to identify those rose species, old roses, whether Chinese or European, which did well mainly in our tropical climate, but which would also do well in sub tropical and perhaps even temperate climates - roses which were resistant to pests and diseases and which do thrive in many south east and other Asian countries. His work was successful enough to produce a number of good varieties, which became popular within India and across the world too.

He was a founder member of the Indian Rose Federation, and had written innumerable articles for the Indian Rose Annual and for many foreign journals. As Editor of the Indian Rose Annual, he brought the publication to such a high standard of excellence that it was praised by many world renowned rosarians.

It is incumbent upon Indian rose breeders to carry on the legacy given by Mr Viraraghavan, to continue on the foundation he has so strongly built. This can be done by taking the help of Mrs. Girija Viraraghavan.

I have lost a fatherly figure, a most beloved rose personality, who encouraged me greatly in my rose research, when I was working for my PhD. He will be remembered forever.

Inspirational Uncle Viru

Ashish D. More
Rose grower and breeder
Karjat, Maharashtra

This great man of high calibre is an inspiration for following his passion and love for roses. Viru Uncle devoted more than 6 decades of his life in studying old species of roses in India. His entire life was emphasized on trying to produce sustainable roses and however eccentric the choices of roses in this objective may have been, the roses which emerged had to be easy to grow and resistant to diseases and pests. For this he selected and worked with two wild rose species *Rosa clinophylla* and *Rosa gigantea* in his breeding. He also served as chief editor of the Indian Rose Annual for more than 3 decades. He travelled worldwide, attending WFRS rose conventions, lecturing about his rose breeding work, and his research papers were published in various international journals. His exceptional contributions in rose breeding earned him many prestigious awards—starting with the Vijay Pokarna Gold Medal in 1988 by Indian Rose Federation. In 2006 he was awarded the Great Rosarian of The World by the Huntington Garden and Library, USA, followed by the World Award by WFRS at Osaka, Japan. The 'Faith Whittlesey' rose variety bred by him won an American Garden Rose Selection award in 2016, and 'Naga Belle' won a similar AGRS Award in 2019.

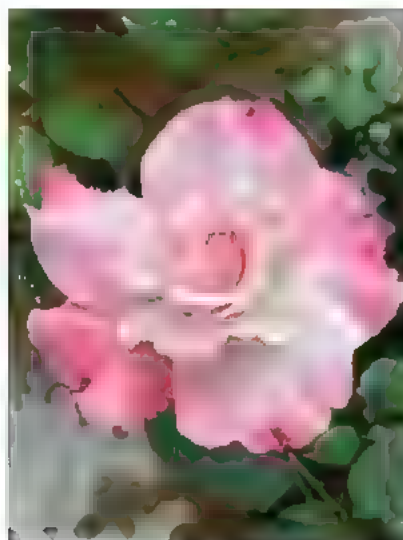
I still remember when I first met him at the 27th Indian Rose Convention 2009 in Ooty. He appreciated my rose exhibits and motivated me to grow roses, and shared valuable information on roses. We had many conversations on heritage roses—he emphasized to me the importance of heritage roses, roses which were introduced before 1950, and appealed to me to grow these roses and preserve them. He himself was in search of such heritage roses which were being grown, without names in various gardens in India.

He used to be a regular speaker at the technical sessions of the national rose conventions in India, which were held annually by the Indian Rose Federation in collaboration with a rose society, and I never missed listening to his lectures at these technical sessions as he always shared his immense knowledge on wild species of roses and his breeding techniques for warmer climates. He was calm and composed, polite and patient, and his exceptional work on roses was visible

through his lectures and articles. His immense effort in collection and planting of heritage roses in the Centenary Rose Garden in Ooty played a significant role for this garden to receive the international award of "Garden of Excellence" from the World Federation of Rose Societies, in Osaka Japan in 2006. Uncle Viru was globally recognized as one of the best rose breeders of the world. His rose varieties were tried and tested in trial grounds of WFRS and accepted in gardens worldwide.

He is an inspiration to me. I began my breeding work in 2009 with modern Hybrid Tea roses and faced problems in germination of rose seeds. Taking care of grown seedlings was a most difficult task as most of them were prone to diseases and pests, resulting in mortality of seedlings. But his article on 'Sustainable Rose growing - An Indian Dream' was an eye opener for me. He urged in his teachings to have a separate line of breeding for warm climates, which I realized now in my breeding. His rose seedlings raised from *Rosa gigantea* had resistance to disease and he only occasionally sprayed a mixture of just potassium bicarbonate and neem oil to control diseases. I learned from him the importance of parent roses in breeding which play an important role in creating new well-established roses.

His legacy will always be with me with his roses 'Naga Belle' a huge pink rose and 'Somasila', one of the best fragrant Indian bred roses.



Somasila Photo Credit : Abhishek Basra

Uncle Viru and his 'Hillview'

Ashok Agarwal
Friends Rose Nursery
Lucknow Uttar Pradesh

In the year 1987 I saw lots of letters received by my father, J P Agarwal, with the return address of 'Hillview, Fernhill Road, Kodaikanal'.

The preparation for the national rose convention in Lucknow was in full swing and except for my father and my wife Sandhya, no one else was there to help. Mr Mokashi, Mr Tilak and someone named Viraraghavan were the only few to provide long distance help.

My father, who was a voracious reader, and a writer, was desperate about fulfilling his commitments to conduct a world class rose convention. Somehow that return address on the envelopes he received left an impression on me. When rose guests started arriving in December 1988 for the great event, there was no reception committee as the office bearers of the Lucknow Rose Society flatly refused to be of any assistance. I had to bring Peter Beales, Peter Harkness and some others whom my father had invited for the convention, on a three-wheeler tempo which were nicknamed 'Ganeshji' in those days. A gentleman and his wife checked directly into a government guest house, thus reducing the burden on my father whose cramped hospitality had already extended to the two Peters.



Viru, Subrata Ghosh, Ashok Agarwal and Kasturirangan

Next day I met the couple for the first time and till then I had known them only as names -Viru and Girja, along with Peter Harkness, Peter Beales, Mr Bansal, Kasturi Uncle and many more but I was not able to connect the postal address to any of the visitors. The big rosarians came and after the convention was over they all returned to their respective homes and countries.

But my first interaction with the big Indian rose names was at the Poona convention. Somehow my hesitation and the aura of my father kept me away from becoming friendly with these big guns of the Indian rose world. Except for Bansal Saheb and Mr. Gokhale of Indore I had little interaction with the others.

It was at the Poona (as Pune was then called) convention when I met once again Viru Uncle, Girja Aunty, Kasturi Uncle, Krishnan, Pingale and a few others. And, here Girja asked me 'Ashok, where is your glass?' And when I told her I don't drink, all the others said 'No, you have to join us and we will make you a physician's sample'. Viru made a small drink for me and we had a good long conversation on various topics including roses. I always used to tell people that an IAS officer has voluntarily retired and become a rose breeder because he was passionate about roses, and all the work he did was supposed to be done by various research institutes. But none of these institutions were manned by real rose growers. Uncle Viru started breeding roses according to local requirements and not according to textbooks or English authors. I too was thinking along those lines and had just noticed the characteristics of Indian species and was keen to incorporate them in my work. But somehow, I lost track of my enthusiasm and never continued with my initial interest. I am glad Uncle Viru continued with his objective and eventually something came up which were heat and humidity tolerant roses. I don't know how much further this work will be carried on (Government laboratories are for conferences and glib talk). If one man can think rightly then it is much more work than all labs/scientists combined together. And this is what Uncle Viru did, along with ground level work, writing and giving lectures and enlightening people, which is a tough job. And Uncle Viru did it brilliantly.

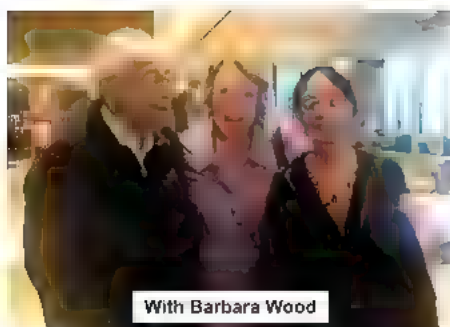
My only regret is, I had never been able to visit the address which I always saw on the envelope in the 1980s while I was becoming a rosarian.

Tribute To Viru Viraraghavan

Barbara Wood

Gold Reef Rose Society

Johannesburg, South Africa.



I met Viru and Girija Viraraghavan at my very first World Regional Rose Convention in 2014 in Hyderabad. I remember sitting in awe of their knowledge on discovering the *R. gigantea* and their adventures trekking the Himalayas

Being a new rosarian I had no idea the passion and

determination of going to "the ends of the earth" to find new rose species. Many had been lost over the years and Viru and Girija were determined to 'rediscover' these species. I cannot imagine how they transported them back to India!! I guess in those days it was easier with fewer restrictions and requirements from the various cross border countries. Today it is a different story!

The next occasion we shared time together was on a flight to Nanyang, China. My suitcase had been damaged on arrival and Viru refused to leave me at the airport whilst I reported it and got compensated for a new case. How thoughtful and kind they were to a woman travelling in China on her own!

In 2019 Jackie Kalley invited the Viraraghavans to South Africa as guests of the Midlands Rose Society and the Heritage Rose Society. Viru and Girija generously paid for their international tickets and South Africa arranged for internal flights and hosting this special couple. I met them at O R Tambo Airport in Johannesburg and my excitement at meeting and hosting them in my city was palpable. The Gold Reef Rose Society (GRRS) organised a luncheon in honour of Girija and Viru at The Herb Farm in Kyalami. Here they entertained members and guests to the most delightful and interesting power point presentation on "Variety is the Spice of Roses."

My partner, Hugh Brown, Viru and Girja retired after this luncheon event to our home and enjoyed a light supper and some South African wine sitting outside exchanging stories and many laughs. I even remember Viru enjoying a small tumbler of whisky'

The following day we took a drive to a nearby suburb to see the jacaranda trees that were in full bloom. They really were at their best. Viru and Girja loved seeing this mass of purple flowers both on the trees and on the ground.

Soon it was time to return and get them to the airport for their return flight to India.

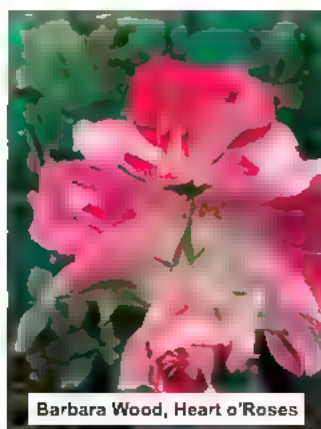
During Covid times Viru named a rose for Sheenagh Harris, and we were all delighted when they joined South Africa online to introduce the rose. And then two years later Viru called me and informed me that they would like to name a rose for me. I firstly thought they had dialled the wrong number but was delighted when Girja assured me that Viru had expressed the wish to have a rose named for me - how far we had travelled since that first meeting in Hyderabad.

'Barbara Wood Heart o' Roses is a beautiful rose and one day when I grow it in my garden, I will forever know of the close friendship we enjoyed over a relatively short time.

Viru Viraraghavan, you were an inspiration and mentor to me. My love for your Indian Roses holds a special place in my heart. You have journeyed on to new places where I have no doubt you are budding and propagating roses and rhododendrons.

Thank you for your friendship and interest in my daily life and rose knowledge. I hold you Viru, close to my heart. And Girja, we are rose soul mates and buddies (pun intended) forever and ever.

May you both know peace.



Memories of Viraraghavanji

Bhagwant S. Thipse,
Past President, Indian Rose Federation
Pune, Maharashtra



With Thipse and others at Bhimbetka

My association with Mr Viraraghavan blossomed like the roses we both cherished, dating back to 1978 when the Indian Rose Federation was founded. Our bond deepened through numerous conventions

4th, 10th, 25th, 34th, and 39th held in Pune and during our meetings at various All India Rose Shows across the country.

I always looked forward to the presentations by Mr Viraraghavan and his wife, which were not just informative but also engaging. His passion for new rose varieties, unique species across India, and tales of visits to the world's grandest rose gardens were infectious. Every session with him was a learning experience, filled with excitement and anticipation. His presentations were like a beautiful bouquet, meticulously arranged to captivate and educate.

I often think back to the early 1920s and later, when pioneers like late B S Bhattacharji, Dr. B P Pal, and other rose enthusiasts in India began hybridizing European and Western varieties to suit our climate. However, Mr Viraraghavan took a groundbreaking approach by crossing Indian species like *Rosa chinophylla* and *Rosa gigantea* plants naturally adapted to our tropical conditions. Through his innovative work, he introduced several Indian bred rose varieties, leaving an indelible mark on the rose loving community and paving the way for future generations.

One of his most remarkable creations was the hybrid variety "Naga Belle," which I had the pleasure of admiring in the prestigious Chanakyapuri Rose Garden in New Delhi. It was a testament to his genius and dedication.

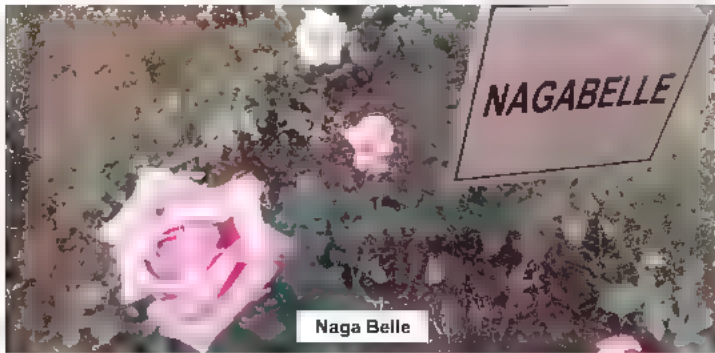
Among the many fond memories, one that stands out is our trip to Bhopal for a national rose convention. It was the 1st of January, and heavy rain poured down, making our planned visit, after the convention, to Bhimbetka (rock caves and palaeolithic drawings) and Sanchi Stupa (a Buddhist complex), both World Heritage Sites, seem impossible. But Mr. Viraraghavan's indomitable spirit shone through. Despite the odds, we managed to set out on our journey, only to have our car tyre punctured in a small village called Abdullaganj. In the pouring rain, the old driver replaced the tyre, and we resumed our adventure. The local shop was out of stock of umbrellas, but the shopkeeper, with great kindness, managed to find five for us from his storeroom. I can still hear Mr. Viraraghavan's humorous quip about how the umbrellas perfectly matched each of our outfits.

We finally reached Bhimbetka, where the rain had eased, and then visited Sanchi Stupa. Though it was late, and the only restaurant was closed, the kind owner prepared a meal just for us. As we drove back to Bhopal, the cold winter air and a second puncture delayed us, but another car was arranged, and we made it back safely. This memory, filled with laughter, resilience, and camaraderie, will always hold a special place in my heart.

In conclusion, his book *"Roses in the Fire of Spring"* is a masterpiece, akin to a PhD thesis, and serves as a reference for young generations aspiring to work in rose hybridization.

And to Gurja, I would like to quote a Sanskrit Subhashita. गृहिणी सचिवः सखी मिथः प्रियशिष्या ललिते कलाविधौ

Translation: Housewife, secretary, companion, friend dear disciple in the fine arts



Viru Viraraghavan : Wisdom, Warmth and Light

Billy West

Co-author of 'Tea Roses, Old Roses for Warm Gardens'
Perth, Western Australia

When I think about M S. (Viru) Viraraghavan it is not only his work creating beautiful, resilient new roses, or his vision of what these roses might be that come to mind. It is also his warm and gentle presence, his knowledge and wisdom and the way he and Girija have spread knowledge, kindness and good will wherever they have been.

I was unable to attend the 6th National Conference of Heritage Roses in Australia at Hahndorf, South Australia in 2001, but the Viraraghavans left a lasting impression on those who did. Friends came back with news of Viru's interest in Alister Clark's *R. gigantea* hybrids, excited by his recognition of the value of Tea, China and Noisette roses in breeding healthy, resilient, evergreen and ever-blooming roses for warmer climates. Viru and Girija returned to Australia to speak at other conferences and their articles appeared in Australian rose breeding and history publications. And so we came to learn more of Viru's rose-breeding inspirations and aspirations. We enjoyed their marvellous field trips from the comfort of our arm chairs, while Girija's articles opened our eyes and our minds to aspects of history and rose growing previously unknown and unappreciated.



There has also been much in the articles and presentations of Viru Viraraghavan to open the eyes and the mind – inviting us to give our attention to things that matter, large and small. For example, in *The Sustainable Rose Garden*, Viru writes *What do we mean by “sustainable rose growing”? Sustainable”, in the broad sense means “something which can be maintained and for the environmentally conscious as all of us rose growers should be – it means “maintenance without adverse environmental impact,”* p239

I love this sense of care and responsibility guiding Viru's breeding work. I love his desire to create and share beautiful roses with the capacity to recover from infection without the use of fungicides or pesticides; with lovely, healthy, evergreen foliage (*“It is well to remember that the rose in a tropical situation has to compete with many other beautifully luscious tropical plants, which are endowed with lovely evergreen foliage. It therefore becomes imperative to create roses which have equally beautiful evergreen foliage – such roses as are beautiful even when not in bloom”* pp244-5), roses suitable for climates that challenge many of the world's greatest roses (*“Can there be a universal great rose, or do we have to satisfy ourselves with roses adapted to climatic regions? Sadly, regional adaptation seems to be the rule.”* p241)

Viru recalibrated the genetic melting pot in his search for healthy, hardy, beautiful rose plants that would thrive – exult – in warmer climates. He chose to work with *R. gigantea* and *R. chinophylla* and to return to Tea, China and Noisette roses for their delicate beauty and resilience. In doing so, he has brought glorious colour and luminosity into his new roses. They are wonderful and diverse creations, bright and beautiful but never hard or harsh, full of liveliness and individuality, hardy plants with beautiful foliage and graceful habits.

It was not until 2008 that we finally had the chance to meet in person, when Girija and Viru stopped by on their way to the Mornington Peninsula HRIA Conference on the other side of our continent. Their ease and grace and the warmth of their friendship was such an unexpected gift, making it the most marvellous visit. Much was crammed into the days they were with us in Perth. So many rose lovers wanted to meet Viru and Girija, and there were visits to public and private rose gardens and nurseries, and great gatherings in the homes of HRIA members, to share stories and delicious food. It was a memorable and very happy time and the beginning of wonderful friendships.

Two years later, when visiting the U.S.A. soon after Viru and Girija's recognition as Great Rosarians of the World, our marvellous host Gene Waering took Hillary Merrifield, Lynne Chapman and myself to visit Pat Henry at her home in South Carolina. Here we saw living plants of Viru's roses for first time. Not only 'Faith



Whittlesey', 'Garnet Crest' and Pat Henry's beautiful namesake with its glowing petals but, to our great surprise, a rose named 'Aussie Sixer' for us, and our fellow authors of *Tea Roses Old Roses for Warm Gardens*. What an honour! And what a rose - bred from the iconic and beloved roses 'Reve d'Or', 'Safrano' and *R gigantea*. In due course, 'Aussie Sixer' was imported into Australia and as I write this in the

coldest month of the year, there is a vase of its exquisite blooms beside me, cut from the plant in our garden - the winter blooms sublimely lovely, the foliage beautiful.

The www is a tremendous tool to enable people with shared interests and passions to find each other and to stay in close contact and so it was that over the years, emails and posts on Face Book and HelpMcFind.com nurtured our friendships and mutual passion for these special roses.

We met in person again in the UK in 2014 when rose lovers from all over the world gathered for a joyous Heritage Rose Foundation Conference that honoured David Stone. David was retiring from his long-held position as Head Gardener at Mottisfont Abbey where he had worked under the late Graham Stuart Thomas, before taking the baton to continue GST's great work conserving heritage roses and showing the world how extraordinarily versatile and lovely they are in the garden. Viru's presentation was both a tribute to these visionary gardeners and an appreciation of the beauty, artistry and resilience that delights and nourishes lovers of heritage roses. It also provided an insight into the development of his own beautiful creations, inspired in part by Graham Stuart Thomas's musings that if Noisette roses [and Teas and Chinas] might be developed in more vibrant colours it would be a marvellous thing. I am amazed at Viru's vision and achievements. In choosing parent plants that allow petals to carry colour without sacrificing their translucency and lustre, and give rise to foliage that is both beautiful and persistent, he has given the world roses so full of light.

It seems to me that Viru was also full of light, with his lack of hubris and quiet modesty, his great wisdom and good humour. What a uniting force he and Giriya have been and continue to be in the rose world; sharing the light of knowledge, warm friendship and a spirit of goodwill wherever they go.

The Sustainable Rose Garden. A reader in Rose Culture. Ed. Pat Shanley, Peter Kukielski and Gene Waering, Newbury Books, Havertown, PA. 2010

Viru Viraraghavan

Charles Quest Ritson

Author, rose grower

Editor BAON (By Any Other Name) of WFRS

United Kingdom

Viru and Girija Viraraghavan owe their spectacular ascent to renown among rosarians to a chance encounter with Helga Bricchet in January 2000. Viru had been asked to speak about his work with *Rosa gigantea* and *R. chinophylla* at the annual conference of the Indian Rose Federation, which was held on that occasion at Jaipur. It had been designated a World Regional Conference by the World Federation of Rose Societies and Helga attended as President of the WFRS, along with her vice President Mercedes Villar. Neither of them had ever heard about of Viru's rose breeding nor of the remarkable advances that he had already made towards the development of new roses for subtropical climates.

So riveted were these two foreigners by what they heard and saw that day that Helga immediately asked Viru and Girija to attend the WFRS's World Convention at Houston in the United States in May that year. And Mercedes invited them to travel afterwards to Uruguay. These invitations proved to be just the beginning of more than twenty years of visits to international rose conventions all over the world where, by virtue of Viru's lectures and the charm and good conversation of both of them, the Viraraghavans quickly made friends with rosarians of every nationality.



Viru was not just a rose breeder. He was fascinated by plant breeding and instinctively looked for opportunities to make crosses between different plants, to see what horticultural advance might thereby be gained. He did not confine himself to roses, he even pollinated flowers on wild plants of *Rhododendron arboreum* subsp. *nilagiricum* with pollen that he received from correspondents in the United States. Then he went back in the autumn to collect the seed. The excitement of making these crosses lay in contemplating the hidden genes that lay within the parent plants and wondering how they would express themselves when the seedlings grew and flowered. Subsequently, the seeds of these crosses, sent to the U.S., resulted in plants being grown in faraway New Zealand.

Brigid and I first met Viru and Girja at Sangerhausen in 2003. Had we been more assiduous attendees of international rose conferences, we would have met them sooner. The European Rosarium was a place of pilgrimage for us that we already knew well because we had made our first visit shortly after the collapse of the Soviet Empire and the subsequent reunification of the two Germanys, which we attended in September 1990. Viru and Girja were amazed by the large number of heritage roses cultivars of historic importance of which they had read but never seen, which is a common experience among rosarians whenever they visit Sangerhausen. Viru was among the speakers at that convention and he and Girja quickly acquired new friends among the many rose-lovers that they met. Their great knowledge of roses and their open enthusiasm for both roses and people are traits to which everyone responds.

We met them again in 2007 at a regional conference at Chaalis, which was organised by the great French rosarian Professor François Joyaux, and on this occasion we began to know them better. Viru's natural shyness loosened by Girja's social confidence. We realised that, as well educated members of Brahmin families long in the service at a high level of the British Raj, their understanding of our own country and their use of English were as near complete as we had ever encountered among our foreign friends. And it was at Chaalis that we realised that they were inseparable in everything they did. Often at week-long conferences a husband and wife will look at different exhibits and perhaps attend different events, but Viru and Girja moved round together as a single unit, so that we cannot think of Viru without thinking also of Girja. And I remember that, at the grand dinner on the last evening of the Chaalis conference, Girja wore a magnificent silk sari that was much admired by everyone.

Thereafter, we met Viru and Girja at almost every conference and convention that was run under the auspices of the WFRS. Viru was invariably asked to update the attendees on the results of his hybridising and he usually delivered those

lectures standing side by side with Girija on the podium. Everything they undertook was a joint effort and of the highest interest. When we met at a convention lavishly laid on at Peking in 2016, I noted in my diary that 'Viru and Girija's account of their rose-breeding was by far the best of the presentations'.

Over the years, Viru and Girija have been very generous in giving budwood and plants of their roses to their friends. The upshot is that we often meet those roses in places that we do not expect to see them, even in parts of the United Kingdom where we would not anticipate finding Hybrid Giganteas growing so enthusiastically. But nowhere is more associated with Viraraghavan roses in our minds than Helga Brichet's garden in Umbria. Here their habit of flowering right at the start of the rose season means that, by the middle of April, the olive trees in Helga's groves are draped in large single or semi double flowers in a palette of beautiful colours and shades, all set off by the silvery leaves of the trees.

We last saw Viru at the Brussels convention in June 2023. His fascinating lecture, delivered as ever with Girija, gave rise to prolonged applause. I thought that he looked as if he was ageing but it never occurred to me that he would die so soon after the conference. His death was a great shock, and we worried that Girija, always so close to him, would find the life of widowhood very difficult. I think it is fair to say that she did not find it easy to adjust to the change but her courage and good sense have seen her through. And she will always be supported and appreciated by the very many friends that she and Viru have made all over the world ever since that day at Jaipur in January 2000 when Helga Brichet and Mercedes Villar realised how much the Viraraghavans had to offer, not just to the world of roses but also to the lives of everyone they met.

Viru Viraraghavan

Clair Martin
Curator Emeritus of the
Huntington Rose Collection
USA

A major part of my education as the curator of the Huntington Library rose garden was to meet rosarians from around the world. When Viru and Girija visited our gardens I was impressed with Viru's dedication to develop roses from native Indian species that would be remontant and disease resistant. Not an easy goal but he was working on that and incorporating a native strain of *Rosa gigantea* as well into his breeding program.

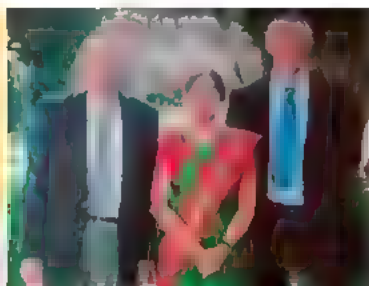
When it was decided to establish a new annual lecture series *The Great Rosarians of the World* (GROW) in 2000 it was decided that our goal would be to acknowledge rosarians from around the globe.

Viru was placed on the initial list of honorees and became our sixth honoree in 2006. While some of his garden roses had limited availability in the US market it was hoped that his lecture would help expose beautiful and unique creations to a new audience.

Now that Viru is no longer with us it is my hope that his dedication to develop new lines of healthy ever-blooming roses for warm climates will be adopted by the next generation of hybridizers and become a living memorial to this Great Rosarian.



'Great Rosarians of the World'
Award by the Huntington Library
and Gardens California, 2006



With Clair Martin 2006

Remembering Viru

Crenagh Elliott
Canadian Representative at
WFRS (until 2023), rose record keeper
Canada

I remember Viru as a charming quiet gentleman who, with Giriya, was one of the few rose couples that attended international rose conferences. We had not expected them both to greet David and me in the middle of the night in Hyderabad before the pre-tour, in 2014 at the World regional Rose Conference. I am grateful that we met in Brussels at the World Heritage Regional Rose Conference in 2023 and I will always remember Viru there.



Crenagh Elliott, Gregg Lowery and Viru, Brussels 2023

Tribute to Mr. M.S. Viraraghavan (Viru)

Derek Lawrence
Executive Director
World Federation of Rose Societies
U K.

One of the privileges of being Executive Director of the World Federation of Rose Societies is the ability to travel around the world and explore interesting cities, experience various cultures and marvel at spectacular rose gardens. But more importantly, is meeting remarkable people who make the rose world such a special and endearing place to belong.

One such gentleman was the late Mr. M. S. Viraraghavan, known to all as Viru. On my first encounter, I realised that he had amassed a huge amount of knowledge about rose culture. Viru was an accomplished grower, experienced lecturer, rose judge and proficient breeder. He enthusiastically flew around the globe, assisted by his devoted wife Girija, where he spread his wit and wisdom about the genus *Rosa*. His very informative and truly inspirational lectures were the pinnacle and highlight of many WFRS World or Regional Conventions. Viru had the personality and skill to captivate and inspire his eager audience, which is not always an easy task when addressing international delegates of various languages and cultures. For Viru, roses were his absolute passion and he naturally spread his enduring love for the rose whenever he was amongst people. Viru was always extremely generous and accommodating with everyone that he met. He was quite simply a fine Indian gentleman who admirably became a quintessential international ambassador for the rose. He was aptly bestowed with the Federation's 'World Rose Award' in 2006 in recognition for his services to the rose.

Viru has departed from this world, leaving us all with a lasting legacy of appreciating the inner virtues and attributes of the rose that this beautiful genus offers in copious amounts. It was an absolute privilege and pleasure to have known Viru during my term of office. May he rest in eternal peace, surrounded by his beloved roses.

Memories of Viru, A Rose Maker

Dr Durston

Co-author of 'Tea Roses,
Old Roses for Warm Gardens'
Perth Australia

Two rosarians that I like to put into the same sentence are Viru Viraraghavan and Alister Clark. Both were masters of breeding roses that are disease free and drought resistant. Both of these rose men used *R. gigantea* crossed with old garden roses in their rose breeding programme. Viru once told me that one must be a dreamer first and then a rose breeder. This puzzled me until he explained that it is important to dream about how you would like the resulting new rose to be and then apply the science for the best results. *R. gigantea* is a great favourite of mine and I have a rather lovely collection of Alister Clark *R. gigantea* hybrid climbers. Strict quarantine on rose imports to Australia prevents me from owning more of Viru's roses from India, it's disappointing, but I can dream and make my own roses as the next best solution.

I am drawn to people with charm and serenity with a good sense of humour and who are comfortable in their own self and also like chocolate. Viru had all. Viru also had a heartfelt interest in making the world a better place for us to be in. Viru, a friend in roses, a friend in Test cricket, and both Viru and Girija are friends to me. Sadly, Viru left us last year. I know that we can continue our friendship silently in my head as there are so many rose questions to ask.



With Dr Durston and others, Japan 2012

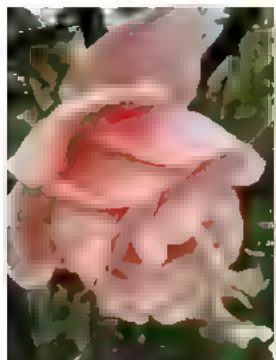
I airbrush my life selfishly to manage my roses. Every day I spend hours tending to them and in the summer months keeping them well watered. May I quote Viru now, he generously thought our Tea Rose book was as good as the cricket term 'Sixer' "when a batsman hits the ball so hard that it lifts up high and sails over the field and into the stadium, earning him six runs to his total, a spectacular achievement" that makes my day. A happy coincidence being we wrote the Tea book with six co-authors. Even when winter skies are dull and overcast, I am able to go to the garden and find a bloom of 'Aussie Sixer', the rose that was named by Viru for the six authors of 'Tea Roses, Old Roses for Warm Gardens'. I do love having a rose named just for us. As I walk the garden path and past my two plants of 'Aussie Sixer' I always give them a nod and a smile.

Viru bred new roses for the future with combinations of old roses with *R. gigantea* and also with the wild rose *R. chinophylla*. There are many of his dear friends that will always enjoy these roses, they tell a lifetime of stories. 'Aussie Sixer' is a combination of one of the best of the old Tea Roses 'Safrano' with 'Manipur Magic' one of Viru's own roses (*R. gigantea* x 'Reve d'Or'). It is a healthy robust growing rose that is not affected by the usual fungal rose diseases. In plain words 'Aussie Sixer' is a cracker of a rose and has the colours of 'Safrano' with a soft apricot centre. By chance I was visiting at the garden of 'Fresh Woods' in the Elgin Valley, South Africa. This is the beautiful extensive woodland garden of Dr Peter Knox Shaw and his wife Barbara. This established garden received the World Federation of Rose Societies Award of Garden Excellence and has many extremely rare old roses growing. It had rained heavily so I needed to borrow a pair of Peter's wellington boots for our garden walk along the many winding paths. I was stopped in my tracks in front of two lovely *R. gigantea* roses clinging to the tree tops with fabulous huge blooms, one pink and one lemony ivory. Viru's roses had found a very beautiful place to call home. Generous Viru had gifted 'Viru Pink' and 'Viru Yellow' (trial names) to Peter for trialling at 'Fresh Woods'.

Viru shared tips from his many years of rose study freely to help others to learn the science of rose breeding. I have a small example. I share a passion for apricot coloured Tea Roses and Viru sent me a message to help me on my way to reach my dream to breed a rose that had to be the colours of the summer evening sky. This was a tall order to ask of our generous friend. Viru sent back a message that I should take a good stable pink Tea Rose and cross it with an apricot shaded Tea Rose. I have many pink Tea Roses and only one apricot and so I crossed 'Duchesse de Brabant' x 'Anna Olivier'. Following all the hybridizing rules of collecting pollen and allowing it to ripen and then taking the bridegroom to the bride rose, I was able to collect mature hips the following autumn. One of the

seedlings grew to be a strong healthy plant and even more thrilling it was a good shade of apricot. This new rose also heralded the arrival of my twin grandchildren so I naturally named it 'Stella and Charlie' They are thrilled to have their own rose just as I am to have 'Aussie Sixer'.

Viru and Guriya were a wonderful team in lecturing at rose conferences. The 2007 conference was held in the medieval Royal Abbey at Fontaine-Challis with seven centuries of history and exceptional collections of art. All this and just forty kilometres from Paris, is stamped as one of their best – extraordinary and exceptional. Their beautiful book 'Roses in the Fire of Spring' is an amazing waltz through the botanical escapades of both Viru and Guriya, I treasure it, thank you both for your friendship and your roses and your kindness to others.



'Stella and Charlie'
My New rose with
Viru's advice



'Virus Yellow' (Codename)
in Fresh Woods, S Africa

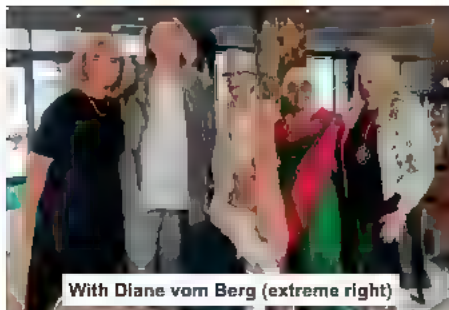
Honouring Viru

Diane vom Berg

President

World Federation of Rose Societies

Australia



I can't remember the exact time I met Viru and Girija at a Rose Convention and thought 'what a delightful couple'. I then began to appreciate their involvement and commitment to the rose over the years since

Viru's dedication to the rose is well known throughout the World of Roses, his breeding

has produced many outstanding new roses, lectures at Rose Events and most recently the publication of their book has brought many memories to all who met him. Viru was always happy to participate at World Federation of Rose Societies events and with Girija have presented many informative lectures at Conventions.

A founding member of the Indian Rose Federation and Editor of their Rose Annual for over 35 years is testament to a man and his roses. All societies rely on its members for support and this is an outstanding commitment over many, many years.

We last met in Belgium, 2023 at the 15th Heritage Rose Conference held in Brussels and again a very interesting lecture was presented by Viru and Girija, their knowledge of roses was freely shared with delegates.

As President of the World Federation of Rose Societies it gives me the great pleasure to honour Viru a highly respected rosarian, and to his immense contribution to "The Rose". We will all miss his presence at rose events but can share our memories of Viru with others present.

Viru Uncle : My Inspiration

Ganesh Shirke
President Rose Society of Pune
Pune Maharashtra

The name 'Viru Viraraghavan' has everything in it. I still remember that I had just made my debut in the rose field and was making new acquaintances while trying to learn about my hobby through Face Book. At that time not many rosarians were using Face Book but Girija Aunty (I fondly call her Rosy Mom) was using Face Book (social media). She and I first got to know each other through Face Book. I then heard a lot about Viru Uncle and Girija Aunty from Mr Arun Patil and when I actually met them and experienced their warmth and affection my joy knew no bounds.

The work done by them on roses is unbelievable. They wrote about the history of roses in India, about the very first roses in our country. Viru Uncle wrote an article on a distant journey they made, in the wilderness, on a specific search, to look for a rose species and that article became very popular. He also gave many lectures on the subject of breeding with Indian rose species and how this fitted into the history of the rose in India, at the Conventions of Indian Rose Federation held in various states, and that is why today we Indian rosarians understand our rose history.



Chiplunkar, Girija, Viru, Arun Patil, Ganesh Shirke

There are many examples of seeing roses in the hands of Rajas and Maharajas, kings and emperors, as depicted in many paintings, but only Uncle and Auntie told us about rose flowers in the hands of deities Brahma and Vishnu.

Uncle bred roses that grow best in hot climates and the hybrids he created became famous all over the world. His 'hand painted' roses were a hit. His goal was to bring the special qualities of the wild rose in the roses he hybridized. So that no disease or deficiency can harm the rose and the rose will remain healthy. For this purpose, some of the best varieties were created by him and for this he received many awards. Even though he received many awards in India and abroad, his rose journey did not stop, he continued creating many new varieties. Generally people stop their work after receiving awards, but roses never let him stop, that is because his love and affection for roses kept forcing him to continue his work.

He received two of India's highest awards, the 'Vijay Pokarna Gold Medal' of the Indian Rose Federation and the 'Suvarna Padak' awarded by The Rose Society of Pune. When I came to know that he would be coming to Pune to collect the gold medal, I got Guriya Auntie's phone number and called her, I told her that I want to meet you, she said that she and Uncle would like to meet me too. When they came to Pune, my happiness skyrocketed and it happened too! Both of them came to my apartment on the 5th floor, climbing 65 steps to see my roses and along with them Mr Kasturirangan Sir also came, so it was like . 'Sone Pe Suhaga!'

At that time I was new to this world of roses so it was a special celebration for me to have such a big celebrity come home to see my roses! It was an acknowledgment of whatever work I was doing or had done in roses at that time. While looking at the roses on the terrace, Viru Uncle's eyes fell on a rose and he got an extraordinary look of joy on his face because it was an extraordinary rose that I had hybridized. Its leaves were like hibiscus leaves. For that rose Viru Uncle gave me an appreciative pat on the back. His words 'keep up the good work' are still ringing in my ears and I still feel the touch of that appreciation.

That's why I was able to produce many roses later. While inspecting the roses on the terrace, Viru Uncle and Kasturirangan Uncle also praised one more thing that all my roses were planted in 'Coco peat' and I was the only person growing roses in coco peat at that time. The matter was carefully investigated and some things were also explained to me. It was a memorable and unprecedented celebration for me and it didn't stop there. After the Gold Medal award, all of them went back to their homes. But they kept calling me and asking about the rose I had hybridized. But for some time that rose didn't grow and eventually it died, but it took me closer to Viru Uncle and Guriya Auntie.

Ode to Viru

Geeta Doctor
Journalist
Chennai, Tamil Nadu

The fragrance
never fades,
Even as the light dims.
Just as the petals you
gathered together on your
journeys to the dew scented
mountain tops
Will inspire generations
as the love of two
entwined souls
in search of beauty

In sadness and gratitude



Interview of book by Geeta Doctor, RMR Library Chennai, August 2023

My Friend Viru

Gene Waering

Heritage rose hobbyist and editor of the 2016
American Rose Society Annual and other rose publications
Jacksonville, Florida, USA



In the early 2000s, I encountered Viru's work while seeking a challenging retirement project involving a pleasure gardener's keen interest in roses. As I delved deeper into Viru and Girija's efforts to extend the rose's range into tropical regions where it

had never thrived, I became committed to promoting their ideas and varieties in the warm climates (about 1/3) of the U.S. This collaboration led to partnerships with nurseries like Roses Unlimited (RU) in South Carolina and Angel Gardens in Florida. I helped introduce varieties such as 'Faith Whittlesey' and 'Naga Belle,' both of which went on to win American Garden Rose Selections (AGRS) national trials thanks to RU's Pat Henry's engagement and support in furnishing plants. These roses earned regional AGRS awards for warm climate varieties, the first ever in the national trials.

Our shared fervour blossomed into a fulfilling twenty-year friendship, which included four speaking tours along the Atlantic, Pacific, and Gulf coasts of the U.S. in 2005, 2006, 2013, and 2015. We traveled across much of the country by car, raising awareness about the Viraraghavans' innovative work. I had the privilege, and fun, of organizing these tours on the ground practically and serving as driver as we moved from meeting to meeting.

Girija and Viru proved to be delightful travel companions, their broad knowledge and lively curiosity enriching every conversation. Viru often sat in the front, with Girija behind, navigating with an open map to ensure we stayed on route. After our first trip in 2005, I learned to prepare a list of discussion topics for our drives. Viru and Girija generously shared their wisdom, offering insights that helped shape many of my later rose-related projects, particularly those focused on sustainability. Though Viru was undeniably a master in horticulture, he always communicated

with kindness, thoughtfully incorporating my sometimes-half-formed ideas into larger concepts. "True, Gene, but you might want to consider . . ."

We also met fascinating individuals along the way, a testament to the breadth of their interests and their natural warmth. I was fortunate to become acquainted with their son Vijay and wife Susan, as well as Girja's brother Karti and wife Indira Sandilya, who live in Louisville, KY, and Washington, DC, respectively. One memorable visit in 2006 to California was with my cousin in Santa Cruz, Maria Cecilia Freeman, a noted botanical illustrator, whose watercolors of Viru's roses were later featured as part of a solo exhibition, "Rose Studies," at the Horticultural Society of New York. On several occasions, we stayed with my sister Chris and husband Rick in Asheville, North Carolina. A particularly poignant moment occurred when we visited New Orleans Old Garden Rose Society President Peggy Martin's rose garden near the Mississippi River, only months before Hurricane Katrina floodwater tragically claimed her home and her elderly parents' lives.

Our travels were never restricted to roses. Viru and Girja's wide ranging interests led us to explore many kinds of plants and also enjoy some laughs. During one trip, we visited the home of Richard Figlar, a prominent magnolia hobbyist in South Carolina. I still grow a *Magnolia laevis* he gave me. Girja, with her deep interest in botanical history, enjoyed visiting places like the Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden's rare book library near Richmond, Virginia (VA) where she spent hours examining its 19th century collection of Indian flora from historical hand coloured botanical prints and drawings.

Now, with Viru's passing, the future feels uncertain. Pam Greenwald at Angel Gardens in Florida, among others, has taken steps to preserve his legacy by creating a "Viru Garden." However, broader adoption of the Viraraghavan warm climate rose programme remains limited in the U.S., as much of our climate is not well suited to it.

Reflecting on their contributions, it's clear that Viru and Girja have laid the groundwork for a new global era in rose cultivation. Viru once expressed his dream of developing evergreen roses that could thrive in the tropics "such as Singapore," and I hope that we in the U.S. will continue to pursue a small place in his vision.

For me, it has been a great privilege to know someone as highly evolved as Viru, who pursued this small pocket of human activity for the benefit of all, with such intelligence, kindness, passion, and grace.



Viru Viraraghavan

Gregg Lowery

The Friends of Vintage Roses

Sebastopol, California, USA

A flower is a curious thing, an evolutionary tweak that grabs the attention of insects and other animals. The flower taught the animal world to hybridize and cultivate the great domain of plants. We humans were born to hybridize and cultivate plants.

Roses have claimed the attention of humans for millions of years. As roaming humans settled the earth, roses settled with them. Mass hypnosis might explain why a plant, so limited in its practical value for human survival, can have remained with us for so long. We who are most smitten with the rose, we who gather to share our passion for roses, embrace that hypnosis with joy!

Viru Viraraghavan carried his own passion for roses over much of his life, until at last he could turn his attention full time to breeding new roses. For Viru and his partner in breeding, Girija, roses had crossed their paths throughout their lives in India. The Viraraghavans understood well the challenges that climate posed. Viru was determined to meet the challenges, starting with wild roses native to the



Gregg Lowery and Viru at Gregg's Sebastopol California garden 2016

subcontinent as parents of genetic lines that would change the game. Their joint effort to study the old roses of India, to seek out the wild roses, and to connect with the wider world to learn and to share, solidified the value of their breeding work. This careful, thoughtful work has launched a new direction for rose breeding, invaluable to a human population seeking to hold onto a planet where it can do more than just survive, but live joyful lives in the company of plants.

Plant breeding is a rare calling. Its attraction to those who commit is the desire to improve the lives of others. It is taken on by botanists and gardeners whose love of plants runs deep. But it makes of them artists. And in a few cases it makes of the breeder a philanthropist, who sees their mission as a profound commitment to serve humankind. Viru and Gurja have reached a pinnacle that few plant breeders achieve, and many aspire to. Rarely is plant breeding a multi-disciplined endeavour. The Viraraghavans brought history to bear as they worked on their goal. And to share that perspective they named their creations for botanists, plant hunters, and the special history of India as a conduit through which roses have passed to and from the world. When I read 'Roses in the Fire of Spring', Viru and Gurja's chronicle of their lives in roses, I am struck by the image of lives dancing in an eternal dance we humans are engaged in, one more beautiful when our partner is the rose.

Viru and Gurja came to visit me in 2006, after receiving the Great Rosarian of the World award at the Huntington Botanical Gardens in California. Viru's breeding work was known and greatly admired here, and I was honoured by their journey. It was late winter. Pruning was underway. My mother plant of *Rosa gigantea* 'Montecito' had reached a daunting height and grown a massive trunk. As we walked around it, we laughed together, suggesting roses one might cross it with. 'Lavender Pinocchio', I said. That was the rose that my friend Phillip Robinson had crossed with it, years earlier to create a pale lavender flowered Rambler he called 'Twilight Mist'. Viru's retort delighted us all: 'why are all of the Californians so obsessed with that rose with the silly name 'Lavender Pinocchio'?' His soft voice, his ready wit, his thoughtful speculations, and above all Viru's deep well of learning touched all who knew him.

A rose is a curious thing. What is its connection with us? Why does its beauty resonate? Why is it so important that people make new roses? Melanie Smokey of the Shoshone tribe, the first American tribe whose symbol was the wild *Rosa woodsii*, said, 'When you go and you give somebody a hug – someone you really care about that's how the rose is. You can get medicine just by breathing it in!'

There is so much good medicine I have had in my friendship with Viru and Gurja. Perhaps that is the answer.

My 'little said, much done' rose friend : Mr. Viru Viraraghavan

Guohang Wang
Author, Rose Explorer
China

As I picked up my pen to write this tribute, Mr. Viru Viraraghavan seemed to be right in front of me, still telling his legend all about the Rose.

As a representative of the Indian rose-field, he spent his last years buried deep in his own rose world. As one of only a dozen recipients of the Great Rosarians of the World Award, his life was like that of the Indian poet Rabindranath Tagore: 'Let life be beautiful like summer flowers And death like autumn leaves'.

Mr. Viru is an internationally renowned expert in the breeding of heat resistant roses. Wherever he went, he was always accompanied by his wife Girija. Whether in international rose conferences to give lectures, or in any aspect of rose growing, breeding or visiting gardens and people, the couple were true partners. That's why I always called them the Indian rose couple.

I first met the Viru and Girija couple at the 14th International Congress of Heritage Roses held in Sakura, Japan in 2012. Also as the invited speaker of the conference, I made "A Glance over the Ancient Chinese Roses in Song Dynasty", which selected the Chinese suspected *odorata* rose "Telangana Pink" data that they found in India. This beautiful rose was named after the Indian state of Telangana, where it was found in their government residence, an old bungalow.



With Guoliang Wang, 2016 Beijing, China World Regional Rose Convention

Since then, Viru had become my eternal rose friend, writing to each other constantly, and talking very happily about the history of rose evolution and the identification of ancient roses.

Later, as speakers of conferences, we met in Sangerhausen, Germany, in New York, the United States, Beijing and Nanyang, China. We used to drink the Darjeeling Tea they gave me and talk about how Robert Fortune, a British plant hunter, stole Anxi (安溪) tea trees from Fujian, China, to Darjeeling and then developed it into the world famous Darjeeling black tea.

In the spring of 2016, I was awarded the Great Rosarians of the World Award. At that time, the Huntington Library, Art Collections and Botanical Gardens in California held a special award party for me and made a keynote presentation. Subsequently, Pat Shanley, president of the American Rose Society, invited me to Manhattan and held another award ceremony for me at the Queens Botanical Garden, and specially invited the Viru couple to introduce my academic background and award speech. Viru's deep, magnetic voice and his peaceful, approving eyes still haunt me.

As editor in chief of the journal of the Indian Rose Federation, he invited me to write such articles as 'From Fa Tee to Calcutta, the Miraculous Old Rose 'Baixiang' in China and "Kakinada Red" in India', and so on. He was also pleased to write a warm Preface to my book *Old Roses in China*, one paragraph saying, "The painstaking researches of Dr. Wang Guohang have resulted in a book which will appeal to all sections of rose lovers—those who are interested in the history of the rose, those who delight in the depiction of roses in art, literature and poetry as well as those who value the genetics and evolution of the rose from original species. There is no doubt that we are privileged to be the first readers of one of the most significant rose books ever written."

"Kakinada Red" found by Viru and Girja in India, is almost the same as 'Baixiang' in China.

The rose is called the queen of flowers and is the universal flower of the world as well. In order to develop new rose varieties that can grow and bloom normally in hot areas, he used wild original species such as *Rosa odorata* 'Indian Form' (*R. gigantea*) and *Rosa clinophylla* in India to cross with modern roses repeatedly, creating various famous varieties. He has contributed his passionate life to the development of the world rose.

Although Mr. Viru suddenly passed away, without any omen, the rich rose legacy he left is still blooming in many rose gardens in Japan, Germany, Britain, France, Italy, the United States and China, just as his heart lives on the hearts of rose lovers across the world.

My Dear Friend : Viru

Gurjit Singh Sidhu,
Rose Enthusiast and Life member of
The Indian Rose Federation
Mohali, Punjab

*"Hazon saal nargis apni be-noori pe roti hai
badi mushkil se hota hai chaman mein didaar paida"*

Iqbal

*"For a thousand years the narcissus has been lamenting its blindness
With great difficulty the one with true vision is born in the garden".*

Viru promoted rose culture with a missionary zeal. He had a pragmatic approach armed with a scientific bent of mind. He cultivated an innovative approach in his rose breeding. Most of the rose breeders around the world bred roses for cold climes, but he undertook arduous odysseys throughout India for locating species roses which would be useful in his goal of breeding roses for warm climates. He crossed Hybrid Teas and heritage roses with these species roses to evolve roses that could be grown successfully in subtropical conditions. His resilient approach sustained him in creating bewitching roses.

In spite of his unique contribution to rose culture, humility was the hallmark of his personality. He was the epitome of nobility as well as civility. He had the dexterity of a surgeon and the concentration of a monk. His childlike affection is worth emulating. I had first hand experience of his caring nature. During the disturbed conditions in Punjab in 1984, after the assassination of a Prime Minister, he was the first to reach out to me, by letter (no mobile phones or emails in those days) to enquire about my safety and well being. This is a gesture that I can never forget.

A void has been created with his departure. His book 'Roses In The Fire of Spring' will be a lighthouse for both a rose expert and a rose enthusiast.

Viru Memories

Helga Brichet
Past President WFRS,
Past Chairman WFRS Convention Committee
Italy

We first met in the Pink City, Jaipur, the capital of Rajasthan in 2000. It was the first event under the aegis of the World Federation of Rose Societies to be hosted in India. Mrs. Meena Pimpalpure, the convenor of the conference introduced me to Girija and Viru Viraraghavan, a name I had already noted on the programme as one of the speakers.

Viru gave a report on the progress he had made using the wild roses, *R. gigantea* and *R. clinophylla* in his breeding programmes. I was riveted to my seat: here this new acquaintance was saying exactly the same things that Prof. Fineschi had been repeating to me so often: "Helga, rose breeders must go back to the roots, they cannot continue buoyantly crossing new varieties with new varieties. In that way genetic novelties sooner or later will be exhausted. Wild roses have been so little investigated, their potential is immense." These two men, so different in character, were visionaries, and how true their prognosis, given the changing conditions to which roses must adapt today.



Helga and Viru

Viru was not shy, he was reserved. But when in company of friends and relaxed, preferably with a single malt at hand, he could tell fascinating stories. This is one I shall never forget.

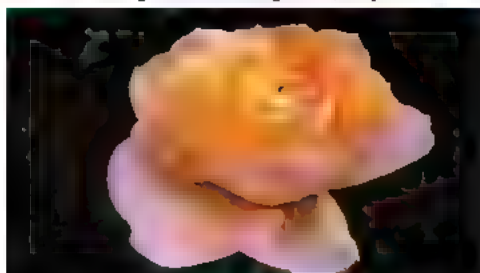
We were at our home in Umbria, sitting on the *R banksia*-covered terrace towards evening, and Viru was seated with a mischievous smile on his face, eyes twinkling. One day as a child, he was allowed to accompany his grandfather on a visit to the Maharajah of Udaipur (The grandfather was the Dewan, Prime Minister to the Maharaja, in the 1940s). The little Viru was placed in the corner of an elaborately ornate room and told to keep quiet and behave himself. After having spent some time studying the room, its furnishings and fittings, he noticed that a tiny strip of the precious wallpaper had detached itself from the wall. His tiny fingers couldn't resist, he gave a little pull, then another little tug and another. .

Needless to say, this escapade—and its aftermath—remained indelibly printed in his mind.

For us, my husband Andre and I, Viru was true, as one says in Italian, 'without veils'. It was a pleasure and a privilege to have known him.



With Helga in the Ninfa garden, Italy 2004



Helga 's Quest. Vishnupriya in India

Viru Viraraghavan

Henrienne de Briey
Past President WFRS
Chairman WFRS Convention Committee
Belgium



Viru Viraraghavan fell in love with roses very early, at age 18, and had been hybridizing roses since 1965. Despite a great and still promising career in the federal Government of India, and instead of hogging the importance of being in the corridors of power, he decided to voluntarily retire from his job in 1980 to concentrate his life on rose breeding, his passion.

Viru was not only a founder member of the Indian Rose Federation, but an active office bearer within the IRF acting as Vice President from 1982

1985 but also a great contributor of the Indian Rose Annual of which he was the Editor for over 35 years. Viru was one of the most respected men in the Rose World. I must confess that when the first time I met and was able to talk to Viru, I immediately understood that I was meeting a very special and true gentleman in every sense of the word. Sincerely, I must say that he just filled myself and certainly all the people he met with respect and 'awe inspiration'. Viru was a man of great intelligence and integrity, but above all with great humility. Of course, behind a man there is always a woman and his endeavour striving to create new varieties of roses was most ably complemented by his wife and partner Girija. Roses have been in India from time immemorial and they are an integral part of the social life. India is home to some very famous wild roses species, but Viru, with his plant breeding skills and a vision of the future, worked with these rose species and contributed significantly to the development of new varieties in India taking up the challenge of creating roses for warm climates which will be part of the Tomorrow's Heritage Roses. What a visionary he was in today's world.

India, through the Indian Rose Federation is a foundation member country of the World Federation of Rose Societies since 1968

India hosted, up to the present, three WFRS Regional Conventions, the first one in the “Pink City” Jaipur, in 1999, the second was in 2014, staged under the banner “Rose Eternal” (Viru thought up the name) in Hyderabad, and I was able to attend as President of the WFRS (2018-2022) the third one named the “Colour of Joy” in Kolkata in 2020

In Kolkata, Viru and Girija were both full of empathy and kindness towards me during the convention

Janaki Ammal (1897-1984) was an Indian woman scientist with a remarkable history and a great legacy as a pioneer in botanical research. To honour her memory Viru bred and named a rose for her. With delicatessen the colour of the rose was perfectly in accordance with the saris the lady was used to wear all the time. I have a fond memory to have had the honour to plant ceremoniously this rose, with Viru, in the centre of the Botanical Survey of India's gardens in Howrah nearby Kolkata where a new garden was created and named 'E. K. Janaki Ammal Rose Garden.'

Viru was of course, through his remarkable knowledge, respected as a great breeder and was connected to the entire rose world.

His connection to Belgium was very special. Visiting in 1995 the Botanical Garden in Meise (near Brussels) he was able to trace the correspondence between François Crepin, the Belgian rose taxonomist par excellence, and the Curator of the Kolkata Botanical Garden, in the late 19th century. These letters surprisingly traced the discovery and the taxonomy classification of some Indian rose species, with which Viru was working from the 1990's, namely *Rosa clinophylla* and *Rosa gigantea*.

As Convenor of the 15th International Heritage Rose Conference, it was obvious to me that Viru along with Girija should be part of the renowned speakers in 2020 as the emphasis of the conference was to be on the world renowned taxonomist,



Planting of the 'E. K. Janaki Ammal' rose in the new rose garden in the B S Garden. Howrah, Kolkata, 2020

Francois Crepin. The topic of their talk at the time was on F. Crepin and the above named two species and their work to use them to breed warm-climate roses. Due to the Covid pandemic the conference had to be postponed to June 2023 and of course I was very worried to know if Viru would still agree to make this long journey. To my greatest happiness, both Viru and Girija travelled to Brussels and it was a great honour for all of us to listen to their talk “*A Great Taxonomist and the World's Largest Rose – A Magical Interaction*”

The talk gave an account of how *Rosa gigantea* was first discovered in the wilds of India and Burma by two British plant explorers and how the botanical specimens came to the herbarium of F. Crepin, who played a major role in according specific status to the new found species. Following the footsteps of the plant hunters Viru did an expedition in 1990 and was able to locate the species in the wild, in north-east India. Viru gave us some details on the new range of hybrid *giganteas* he had bred from the plants raised from this expedition.

At the end of their talk a rose hybridised by Viru was named in the memory of our late friend, Ingrid Verdegem, and presented to the audience and Ingrid's family. Ingrid was a knowledgeable Belgian rose person, a member of the National Royal Belgian Rose Society, representing our country within the WFRS Heritage and Classification committee and as such a very good friend of Viru and Girija. Thanks to Viru her name is now flowering for ever.

This is what Viru was, a gentleman with the intelligence of the heart, simply a poet and an artist without any commercial mind-set and in that sense a remarkable rose breeder, a “Friend” that nobody who met him even only once in life could forget.

His legendary smile was the reflection of all his integrity with a big sense of humour and if India has lost a great rose breeder, the Rose World has lost a great friend but thanks to their book “*Roses in the fire of Spring*” the Viraraghavan rose legacy will be celebrated and preserved all around the world.



Rose Named for Ingrid Verdegem
in Brussels, June 2023



'E K Janaki Ammal'

'Viru' in our memory

M. S. 'Viru' Viraraghavan (May 9, 1937 – December 20, 2023)

Inés Díaz de Licandro

Vice President WFRS South America

Uruguay



On December 20th, 2023 M. S. 'Viru' Viraraghavan flew to a rosy Heaven. He was a "Master" rosarian, one of the greatest! A determined and strong gentleman, loyal to his principles and thoughts and yet, such a kind, and sweet smiling person too! Being passionate for nature and roses, he generously shared his endless knowledge and expertise with others. But he was, above all, a dear friend. At eighteen, Viru was struck by the beauty of the rose 'Julien Potin' in full bloom, a yellow creation of the "Lyons Magician", Joseph Pernet Ducher. Since then, the scent and beauty of roses have perfumed and enlightened

Viru's entire life – a long journey of devotion shared with his loving wife Girija.

He was as eminent a rose breeder as might have been at their times Henry Bennett, Rudolph Geschwind, Joseph Pernet Ducher or Charles Mallerin. But Viru was different for he lived in India, a warmer country. When he was young, he had a vision, to see some day roses growing in the flower borders along the Marina Beach in Chennai in south India. Enamoured with this idea, he began his life-long quest of beautiful, easily grown roses especially suited for warm tropical and subtropical climates.

In 1960 Girija met Viru and soon in the same year, she married him. The couple has shared a long life strong rapport as well as love for nature, for plants and trees and especially for roses and rhododendrons for more than 60 years. Viru worked

in the Government service in his youth but he soon retired from this activity to devote his life entirely to nature, to rose breeding and plant hunting. In 1980, they moved their home to Kodaikanal and set up their garden where they planted Indian rose varieties, plants and trees. It was their Paradise on Earth.

Viru has been very much inspired and encouraged in his efforts by the elder Indian breeder and nurseryman B. S. Bhattacharj. Both of them were convinced that rose breeding should be imaginative enough to create a separate strain of roses especially adapted for warm tropical climates, so different from the Occidental obtentions focused on winter hardy roses. Viru aimed at this objective by two different ways: by crossing imported heritage rose varieties endowed with complementary qualities for good performance in temperate and warm climates that did not imply new genetic inputs in hybridizations (e.g. Gruss an Teplitz, Mlle. Cécile Brunner, Perle d'Or, Rose Edward, Montezuma, Archiduc Charles, Madame Falcot), and also experimenting with fresh-blood crossings using tropical species roses which grow in India. In this creative approach, he applied mainly *Rosa chinophylla* (the only wild rose that grows in the swamps and river borders of tropical regions, called "kuza" in India), its "relative" *Rosa bracteata*, and *Rosa gigantea*.

Heat resistance was the main of Viru's breeding objectives; nevertheless, he also sought other qualities in his strain of roses as evergreen and attractive shiny foliage when the plant is not blooming, disease resistant, sustainable and vigorous plants that might be maintained without environmental adverse impact, graceful growth habit, good petal texture, good fragrance, the capacity to flower in winter and a wide flower colour range.

Viru and Girija were intrepid explorers and rose hunters. Their excursions to find roses growing in the wild length and breadth of India, through deep woods and forests, climbing up mountain tops and hills were successful, led by perseverance, curiosity and sometimes helped with strokes of luck; they have found many plants, trees and roses, among which *Rosa gigantea* in Mount Sirohi (Shirui), Manipur, close to Myanmar border. Their findings were always carefully preserved, reproduced and generously shared with other rose loving researchers or gardeners throughout the world.

Viru has been an active rosarian in the Indian Rose Federation and also in the World Federation of Rose Societies (WFRS), having attended numerous Conventions all around the world for decades. They visited many sites and met rose friends in every corner of the world, even in remote places as my own country, Uruguay! Viru and Girija have given many lectures through their intense life, captivating their audiences with their knowledge, kindness and generosity.

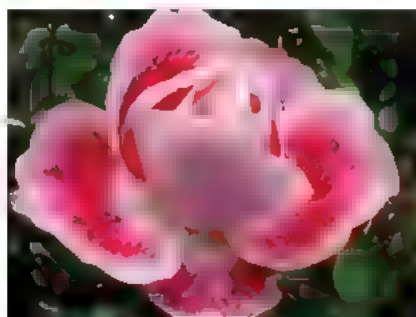
Viru's and Girija's profuse specialised articles have been published in India and around the world. They have been recognized worldwide with many honourable awards.

Viru and Girija issued "*Roses in the Fire of Spring Better Roses for a Warming World & Other Garden Adventures*" in early 2023, a magnificent autobiography where readers can enjoy flowing through a detailed horticultural and personal long life history, intermingled with numerous personal anecdotes in India and in every other site they visited in the world, together with their numerous friends and acquaintances.

I have been one of the lucky persons who was gifted with sharing rose events and trips with Viru and Girija. We first met in Kunming and we had instantly an excellent connection, a rapport. I cherish my memories of them teaching and showing me rose details generously, as it was my first occasion to see wild roses in their habitat in Yunnan, the "Lijiang Road Rose" land.

Viru's creations are a legacy to Humanity. He raised more than 100 new roses that now embellish our world and lives. Some bear magic names which recall the rose history and Indian sites, others have been baptised in honour of renowned explorers, botanists or scientists as Sir George Watt, General Sir Henry Collett, Frank Kingdon Ward, Leschenault de la Tour, Mikinori Ogisu, or E. K. Janaki Ammal. Viru also named the beautiful "hand painted" rose 'Priyatama' for Girija, which means "the beloved".

Viru used to say that he dreamt about their roses growing in many gardens across the world much after he and Girija had gone, as their small contribution to the beauty of this world. Now that Viru is in Heaven, his enormous legacy is among us: each of his creations is flourishing, blooming and scenting our life and world. Thank you dear friend! While you stay forever in our minds, may your soul fly freely amongst the most beautiful and fragrant of your Indian roses!



Priyatama

Roses are well... They're the best...

Beautiful Viru

Jeri Jennings

Hentage Roses Group USA

California USA



But among wonderful things about roses is the way they lead you into friendships you'd never have made - were it not for roses

We had travelled to Visalia, to celebrate Ralph Moore's 100th birthday. A joyous occasion in itself, but to add to the joy of a wonderful day

were two guests we didn't expect. And so, we had the joy of meeting Viru and Girja Viraraghavan for the first time. Since then, we've had the pleasure of enjoying more times with Viru and Girja - always surrounded by joy, and roses and lovers of roses. At the 'Celebration of Roses' event, and at a number of other gatherings of roses and rosarians. Always a joy.

And as a bonus, we've enjoyed meeting some of our favorites among Viru's wonderful roses. A continuing joy in our garden is '*Naga Belle*.' Another beauty one we're coming to love is '*Remembering Cochet*.' Nothing could be further apart, I'd think, than would Viru's conditions and mine - but those Viraraghavan roses are stars in our drought-ridden Southern California garden.

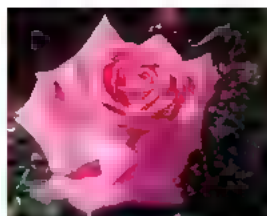
It must be true. It really DOES TAKE beautiful people to make beautiful roses.



'REMEMBERING COCHET'
in Jeri's garden



'Jeri's Purple Jewel'
bred by Viru



'NAGA BELLE' in
Jeri's garden California

Memories of Viru

Jill Perry

Curator, San Jose Heritage Rose Garden
California USA



I became interested in Heritage Roses in the early 1990s after my husband and I built a Victorian style house. I soon met Bill Grant who lived a few miles away, and had a spectacular garden of old roses. He also had an extensive library of books on old roses. I visited him fairly often to borrow books and see his garden. He told me of his Indian friends, Viru and Girja, and of the 'Old Rose Round Robin'

That was a letter exchange among heritage and species rose enthusiasts around the world, back in the days before the internet. Each would, in turn, receive the packet of letters, remove their previous one and write about anything new they had learned, and then send the packet to the next member. How I wished I had fallen in love with roses sooner so I could have been a part of that group!

Sometime in the late 1990s, Bill handed me a little packet of seeds of *Rosa gigantea* he had received from Viru. I put them in a drawer in my refrigerator and forgot about them for several months. I finally decided to see if they would sprout, and one did. It grew quickly, and in a few years it became a very large plant.

I finally met Viru and Girja in 2006, when they received the 'Great Rosarians of the World' award at the Huntington Library near Los Angeles. Many of my friends came, and what a great time we all had! After their talk, our group of friends, members of the Heritage Rose Group, took Viru and Girja out to dinner, so we could all chat with them and get to know them better. The next day many of us drove to Visalia to spend some time with Ralph Moore, the famous breeder of miniature roses. Viru and Mr. Moore had a great time talking about breeding

roses, and the rest of us had a great time listening to them. The following year, there was a rose conference in Senlis, France, near Paris. I have memories of Girja telling me how easy it was to travel wearing saris, and of resting on a bench with Viru and Girja at Giverny, the artist Monet's garden.

In 2009, they came to California when the San Jose Heritage Rose Garden, where I am the curator, received an award from the Great Rosarians. While they were so close, they came to see my *Rosa gigantea*, which was, and still is, enormous. I was so excited to be able to show it to them! It was also a great pleasure to take them to El Cerrito for the annual Celebration of Old Roses, where I introduced them to Miriam Wilkins, the woman who started the Heritage Rose Group.

I planted some seeds from my *R. gigantea*, and grew two plants. I gave both to my friend Tamara Johnson, who has much more space than I do. One was the species, but the other had hybridized with Fortune's Double Yellow, and produces large, double, pale yellow flowers. Tamara was wondering what to name it, and I suggested 'Jill's Giant'. She liked that name, and has given cuttings to Gregg Lowery, who was able to grow many plants of it.

I saw Viru one more time, last year at the WFRS conference in Brussels, Belgium. One evening was especially fun. There was an outdoor dinner at a large park, and I was at a table with Viru, Girja, Gregg Lowery and several other friends. We had so much fun talking, laughing, eating and drinking beer! I will never forget that night!



Remembering Viru Viraraghavan

Jim Sproul

Rose breeder, especially with

Rosa persica (hulthemia)

California USA

I first heard about Viru and Girija Viraraghavan many years ago through fellow American rose breeder Robert Rippetoe. He was visiting our greenhouse and shared cuttings from a plant of *Rosa chinophylla* (a species rose native to India) that he had gotten from Viru. I had never heard about that rose, but he was enthusiastic about using it with the *banksia* roses. He mentioned that Viru and Girija had had some success with it in developing roses that could thrive in the tropics. Since my wife and I had thought about living in the tropics of South America, breeding roses for the tropics was one of my own side interests.

My next interaction with Viru and Girija was when they graciously invited me to speak at the World Federation of Rose Societies (WFRS) regional convention in Hyderabad in 2014. Due to personal reasons, I was not able to attend the meeting and now regret very badly not going.



Jim Sproul standing behind Viru , Nanyang China Regional Rose Conference 2019

It was in China at the regional convention of the WFRS in 2019 that I really got to know Viru and Girija. We were invited to speak at the convention in Nanyang, which hosted a wide array of international rose lovers.

During their rose presentation in Nanyang, Viru and Girija talked about some of their breeding efforts but focused mainly on the history of the rose and the passage of many species of roses from China via trade routes through India to the rest of the world.

The successful and interesting convention hosted a number of speakers from around the world. But more than that, we were treated to many amazing tours that included vast rose gardens and historic sites.

It was during the tours where we travelled together on buses that I got to know Viru and Girija. From those close quarters where we also shared many meals together I was struck by their calm and intentional approach to life. It was a joy talking with them about the future of roses through rose breeding, seeing that they loved exploring the genetics of roses as much as I did.

The tours covered much ground and we walked many steps together from shopping in markets, and visiting the various historic sites of China, to climbing difficult stone steps to see ancient Buddhist temples and to view the oldest ginkgo trees in the world. The physical demands of the daily tours were anything but easy. I learned that steady determination and a drive to see and learn more were the strengths that propelled Viru and Girija on, when many younger people would have just stopped. Seeing their persistence even when the paths were challenging was very inspiring. Their moving forward approach to life is something I would like to emulate in my own life.

These are the things that I will always remember about Viru.

Roses, Relationships, and Remembrance : Meeting Viru at Rosa Belgica

John Bagnasco

Chairman of 'Save The Roses!' Foundation

**Author, Nurseryman, Co-host of Garden of
America Radio Show and podcast on Face Book Live
California USA**

There are moments in life when certain relationships stand out as truly remarkable not just for the individuals involved but for the lasting impact they have on others. One such experience for me was meeting Viru at Rosa Belgica in Brussels, an event hosted by the World Federation of Rose Societies. It was during this gathering of passionate rose enthusiasts that I had the pleasure of getting to meet Viru Viraraghavan, and it quickly became clear that his influence extended far beyond his own garden and breeding work.

Rosa Belgica, with its seminars, dinners, and garden tours, was the perfect setting for individuals like Viru, who had dedicated much of his life to the art of rose



**Nimet M Gilbert, John Bagnasco, Malcolm Manners,
Jill Perry with Girja, Brussels 2023**

cultivation. The event was a celebration of roses and a gathering of people who shared a love for these beautiful flowers, and it was here that I first encountered the quiet wisdom and generous spirit that defined Viru. We met during the event, where Viru was not only present as a participant but also as a source of inspiration. His knowledge of roses was evident in his presentation and in every conversation, but what struck me most was his humility. He was a man who, despite his expertise, listened intently to others, always eager to learn and share in the joy of rose growing.

As the days of *Rosa Belgica* unfolded, I found myself fortunate to spend time with Viru during the various dinners and garden tours. It was in these informal settings that I truly came to understand the depth of his passion for roses and for the world of gardening. Viru spoke with such reverence for the process of cultivating roses, and yet his approach was refreshingly down-to-earth. He had a way of making even the most intricate details of rose cultivation seem accessible to anyone willing to listen and learn.

During the garden tours, as we walked among the rows of roses, Viru's enthusiasm was contagious. He had a remarkable ability to see beauty in every flower, whether it was a perfectly formed bloom or one with a few imperfections. To him, each rose told a story, much like the relationships we form in life. As he pointed out the different varieties and shared anecdotes about his own experiences growing roses with his wife, Girija, I realized that his love for roses was deeply intertwined with his love for life itself.

I could tell that Viru's partnership with Girija was a key part of the stories he told. Together, they had built a legacy of rose-growing that was not only about the flowers but also about the bond they shared. Their garden in India was a symbol of their dedication to one another as well as the art they both cherished. It was clear that their shared passion for roses had brought them closer, and their story was a testament to the power of love and dedication. But Viru's influence was not limited to his personal story. Throughout the event, he and Girija demonstrated a generosity of spirit that left a lasting impression on everyone he met. Whether during a seminar discussion or a casual dinner conversation, Viru was always willing to share his insights and experiences with others. He understood that the joy of rose growing wasn't just in the blooms themselves but in the connections that were made along the way.

At one of the dinners, I remember sitting next to Viru, listening to him speak about his philosophy of life and gardening. He talked about patience, about the importance of nurturing not only the plants we grow but also the relationships we form. He believed that, much like roses, relationships required care, attention, and

a willingness to adapt to changing circumstances. His words resonated with me deeply, and I realized that his approach to life mirrored his approach to gardening with patience, dedication, and a deep appreciation for the beauty in both.

As the event drew to a close, I reflected on how meeting Viru had enriched my experience, as his presence had a way of bringing people together, of fostering a sense of community among the rose lovers who had gathered from all over the world. He had a way of making even the most seasoned gardeners feel like they were part of something larger, a shared passion that connected us all.

Viru's legacy, much like the roses he grew, will continue to bloom long after his life departure. The knowledge he shared, the friendships he fostered, and the passion he inspired will live on in the hearts of those who had the privilege of meeting him. His story, and that of his life with Girja, reminds us that life is best lived with love, patience, and a deep appreciation for the beauty that surrounds us.

Today, as I remember my time and the encounters I had with Viru during those seminars, dinners, and garden tours, I am filled with gratitude. Gratitude for the lessons he taught me, both about roses and about life, and gratitude for the example he set of living with purpose and passion. His legacy is a fragrant one, much like the roses he so lovingly cultivated, and it will continue to inspire all of us who were lucky enough to cross paths with him.

In the end, meeting Viru at Rosa Belgica was more than just a chance encounter. It was a reminder of the beauty that can bloom when we share our passions with others, and of the lasting impact one person can have when they live their life with love, generosity, and dedication. Viru's story will continue to inspire, and his memory will live on in every rose that blooms, in every garden that is tended with care, and in every life he touched.

Tribute to my friend Viru

Kamal Prakash
Vice President and Patron Bengal Rose Society
Kolkata, West Bengal



Viru Viraraghavan made significant contributions to the world of roses, establishing himself as one of the world's most creative and productive rose breeders. His journey into the realm of horticulture was marked by a profound dedication to exploring the potential

of roses, leading to the development of numerous unique varieties. Here are some of his most notable contributions.

Development of New Rose Hybrids

Viru is credited with creating over 118 new rose hybrids, each showcasing unique qualities in various colours and forms. His hybrids include a range of shrub roses, climbers, and those with lush foliage, all designed to thrive in diverse climatic conditions. This extensive work has enriched the diversity of roses available to gardeners and enthusiasts alike.

Focus on Tropical Rose Varieties

Recognizing the challenges posed by warm climates, Viru dedicated his efforts to developing rose varieties that could thrive in such conditions. He successfully identified and utilized local species, which are better suited for tropical environments. His work in hybridizing these species with other varieties has led to the creation of roses that are not only beautiful but also resilient and disease-resistant, making them accessible to a broader audience of rose growers.

Emphasis on Sustainability and Accessibility

Viru and his wife, Girja, adopted a philosophy of rose breeding that emphasizes diversity and natural beauty. They chose not to patent their hybrids, believing that restricting access would hinder the availability of their creations. Instead, they

made their hybrids freely available to friends, acquaintances, and nurseries, embodying a spirit of generosity and a desire to promote the love of roses globally. This approach has allowed their roses to be cultivated not just in India but across the world.

Contribution to Horticultural Knowledge

Through their extensive research and experimentation, the Viraraghavans have contributed significantly to the understanding of rose breeding. Their book, *Roses in the Fire of Spring*, serves as both a memoir and an encyclopaedic resource on rose cultivation, sharing insights gained from their decades of experience. This work celebrates the rich history of rose breeding in India and acknowledges the contributions of earlier rosarians, thereby fostering a sense of community and continuity within the field.

Recognition of Pioneering Botanists

In a tribute to the contributions of women in science, Viru and Girija named a rose hybrid after the renowned botanist E. K. Janaki Ammal. This gesture not only honours Janaki Ammal's legacy but also highlights the importance of recognizing the contributions of individuals who have shaped the field of botany and horticulture. The rose named after her reflects the Viraraghavans' commitment to celebrating diversity and honouring those who have paved the way for future generations.

Global Influence and Collaboration

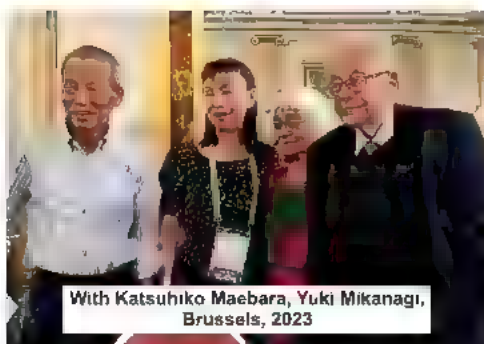
Viru's work has transcended national boundaries, as he and Girija have travelled extensively to meet with rose experts and enthusiasts around the world. Their collaborations and exchanges of knowledge have enriched their breeding programs and allowed them to incorporate global best practices into their work. This international perspective has contributed to the development of roses that are not only beautiful but also adapted to changing environmental conditions, making them vital for a warming world.

Conclusion

Viru Viraraghavan's contributions to the world of roses are a testament to his passion, creativity, and dedication. Through his innovative breeding techniques, commitment to sustainability, and emphasis on accessibility, he has left an enduring legacy that will inspire future generations of gardeners and rosarians. His work has not only enhanced the beauty of gardens but has also fostered a deeper appreciation for the diversity and resilience of roses in the face of changing climates.

My Beloved Friend Viru Viraraghavan

Katsuhiko Maebara
The City of Sakura Rose Garden
NPO Rose Culture Institute
Japan



I first met my dear friend Viru Viraraghavan at the venue of “Europa Rosarium Sangerhausen Centenary Celebration” and “World Federation of Rose Societies Europe Regional Conference” held in Sangerhausen, Germany in 2003.

At that time, I was touring renowned rose gardens in Europe, including the largest one, Europa Rosarium Sangerhausen, to finalize ideas for a new rose garden to be built in Sakura. Only a dozen years had passed since the collapse of the Berlin Wall, and remnants of the East German era remained in various parts of the town. At this conference, there were hardly any Asians apart from us.

As I wandered through the expansive rose garden, I noticed a petite lady in a sari and a quiet gentleman strolling wearily in the heat. I still remember offering to help carry their luggage as I assumed they were from India. Viru, with his philosopher-like demeanour and few words, and Girija, who spoke ten times more than her husband, captivated me with their personalities and we began to get to know each other.

As I learned they are renowned breeders, I decided to create a section in the new rose garden to plant their creations, and they were to send scions for propagation. The section was named “Dream of India.” Roses with strong heat tolerance and a unique atmosphere, bred from *Rosa chinophylla*, a wild species native to India, and *Rosa gigantea* indigenous to Asia, were planted one after another, captivating visitors.

I am preparing to create a new rose garden featuring the roses of two prominent breeders born in Asia: Seizo Suzuki (Japan) and Viru Viraraghavan (India). The rose garden will be located on Shodoshima Island in the Seto Inland Sea. Shodoshima has a Mediterranean climate, which is rare in Japan. Shortly after World War II, Seizo Suzuki founded the “New Japan Rose Society” (present day Japan Rose Society) and established its office at his rose garden “Todoroki Rose Garden.” He dedicated his life to breeding and researching roses, raising Japanese roses to a global level.

Viru and his wife Girija dedicated their lives to breeding roses and studying their history together. I regard them as the “parents of roses in India.” While roses focused on color in the early days of hybridization have a unique charm and attract people, their true essence lies in later hybrids of *Rosa chinophylla* and *Rosa gigantea*, which are highly heat-tolerant, elegant, and powerful, creating their world of beauty.

It is my great honor to meet these splendid rosarians and to collect and cultivate their creations. I will continue to make every effort to pass on their great achievements to future generations for many years to come.



'Maebara's Dream'



Dreams of India Garden, Sakura Japan

Our Viru Uncle

Khader Alam Khan

Past President · Indian Rose Federation

Hyderabad, Telangana

The late Mr. Viraraghavan has been a part of our family for a very long period. For several decades now his name has become synonymous with roses. A doyen in rose cultivation, hybridization and development of new varieties of roses, Viru Uncle, as we would refer to him, was very dear to my beloved father, the late Nawab Shah Alam Khan Saheb. I often sat listening to their exchange of ideas on roses and horticulture with avid interest and keenness.

My father had tremendous regard for Viru Uncle's knowledge and expertise in the world of roses. His association with the World Federation of Rose Societies, the Hyderabad Rose Society and the Indian Rose Federation constitute a memorable phase in his long career and was an enriching experience for all of us, as well.

Though he is no more, Viru Uncle has left behind the aroma and fragrances of rose varieties he has developed. It would be fair to say that the magical world of roses has lost some of its fragrance with the passing on of a stalwart in this domain who will be deeply missed.

May his soul rest in peace!



Khader Alam Khan(second from right) President IRF Kolkata 2020

Remembering Viru Viraraghavan

Malcolm Manners

Professor, Citrus Science, and Curator
Ruth's Rose Garden, Florida Southern College
USA



With Malcolm Manners

I think I first met Viru and Girija Viraraghavan at a heritage rose conference in Chaalis, France in 2007. In the years since, we developed a long distance friendship, corresponding (usually via Girija's Facebook). At some point, Gene Waring introduced me to Viru's roses being grown in the U.S., and through him we began to collect many of those varieties. Viru's instinct for putting together hybrid crosses that were not being used by other breeders, especially in using the Indian form of *Rosa gigantea* and *R. clinophylla*, as well as using both modern

and old rose classes in his breeding program, resulted in quite a wide array of unique roses, many of which have proven to be quite good in our warm, humid Florida gardens. Some of the best performing roses in our gardens are his—Naga Belle, Emina, Faith Whittlesey, Coffee Country, and numerous others, including one he named for me 'Dr. Malcolm Manners'.

On numerous occasions since that first meeting, I have met Viru again, in person, often at international rose meetings. When he has been a speaker, his talks were always impressive, and one listened carefully there were things to learn, here, from a true master! Also, the Viraraghavans visited our gardens at Florida Southern College several times, and it was always a delight to renew the friendship in person, discuss roses, and share Viru's delight in them. I will miss having those opportunities, but seeing his roses in the garden is a wonderful memorial that we cherish.

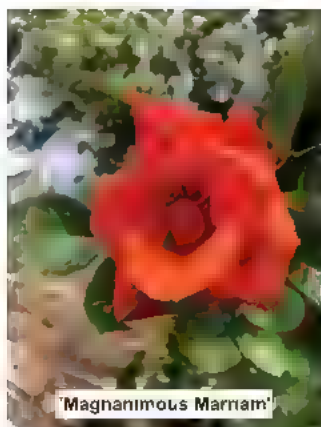


Dr. Malcolm Manners/The Manju Rose

The Kind M.S. Viraraghavan That I admire and Respece

Mariam Ahmad

Rose Growers Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia



Viru Viraraghavan and his wife Girija are passionate Indian rose growers. Their dream was to create beautiful roses and also roses that are better suited for a rapidly changing world. Although he had a stable job Viru chose voluntary retirement in 1980 to follow his obsessive vision of growing and creating wonderful roses

Viru was indeed a lucky man because he had the support of his beautiful wife Girija to pursue his dream. Together, the Viraraghavans created their own rose heaven located in the hill town of Kodaikanal. I have read and seen pictures of their wonderful

sanctuary, however, unfortunately I have been unable to visit. Although I have been to India numerous times it was mostly to places far away from Kodaikanal.

I met this wonderful couple in 2014 in Hyderabad. It was such a wonderful opportunity to meet these beautiful, soft spoken, kind and friendly souls. Even though it was the first time that we met we were chatting away like long lost friends. I guess because we speak the same language, the 'rose language'. Alas, I am not to their level of expertise because I only grow roses and I have no vision of ever breeding roses. This is mainly because I have a full time job which I love immensely, and, secondly, the unpredictable Malaysian weather makes it difficult to pursue rose breeding, and lastly, Malaysians have the perception that growing roses is hard work and costly.

It was while in Hyderabad that I had a beautiful chat about rose breeding with Viru. I told him I had zero knowledge about rose breeding and how lucky was I when he said 'let me explain the process of rose breeding' and of course his journey of creating beautiful roses. And can you believe it, though it may sound

unbelievable, our conversation took place in a textile shop and both of us were perched on high stools. The conversation was so interesting that I forgot that I had followed Girija and other friends to the shop to look at textiles. I ended up buying nothing but I gained valuable insights which were shared by a highly passionate and knowledgeable rose grower who also told me anytime I am ready to try my hand at breeding I am most welcome to Kodaikanal and to get first hand experience under his tutelage.

My last interaction with this lovely couple was in Kolkata in January 2020, and I can still recall Viru laughing at our breakfast table because I had eaten someone's breakfast order mistakenly – my god, I was so embarrassed but Viru calmly said, not to worry.

I have always admired this kind and soft spoken person and have high regard for his ability to create beautiful roses. His passing is indeed a great loss to not only Indian rose growers and lovers but for us in all parts of the world. I am so glad that before his passing he and Girija were able to release their masterpiece *Roses in the Fire of Spring*. A wonderful book that narrates their remarkable efforts to create roses that are better suited for a rapidly warming world.

I feel truly honoured to have known Viru and his lovely wife Girija and I was so truly shocked to hear about his passing that I immediately called a couple of friends to confirm that the news I read was true. It was indeed very sad news especially since due to Covid I had not been able to travel to India like I normally did. It is such a depressing situation being denied to travel and being unable to meet many dear friends one last time and to say one last goodbye.

Lastly, I am confident Viru is now in his heavenly abode surrounded by beautiful blooms that he had created and perhaps he may also be very busy breeding more beautiful and fragrant roses. And, to my dear Girija and the family, sending you positive thoughts and you remain in my prayers.

Mariam Ahmad Face Book name Marriam AGhazali

The Intuitive Viru Viraraghavan

Maurizio Usai

La Pietra Rossa, Garden Design &
Landscape Architecture, Sardinia, Italy



Shortly before Christmas, in December 2023, I saw the first scattered blooms of 'Belle Portugaise' opening at the top of the olive tree in the centre of my old garden. This ancient hybrid of *Rosa gigantea* has deeply ingrained the rhythms of its native land, and it opens its translucent, shell pink flowers when European climbers are in complete dormancy. At the same time, thanks to an unusually mild early winter, another favorite rose with the same lineage but of very recent creation, 'Faith Whittlesey', was fully covered in flowers fragrant ivory white cups just flushed with blush pink,

alongside bright, purple new shoots.

During those same days, the world of rose enthusiasts lost Viru Viraraghavan, one of its most illustrious representatives. I couldn't help but think of a sort of farewell that these exceptional roses wanted to give to a man driven by genuine passion, whose work has gifted us with new and unique varieties

I was fortunate to meet Viru Viraraghavan on two equally unique and special occasions, those gatherings of people who live at opposite ends of the world but are moved by the same emotions, driven by the same enthusiasm, for a flower that, as I once wrote, "*connects lives that otherwise would never have even brushed against each other*" Despite the fleeting nature of our direct acquaintance, I will never forget the generosity, calm demeanor, and serene presence of a true gentleman, before being recognized as a hybridizer of the highest level.

When we first met, in Chaalis, France, in 2007, I was immediately intrigued by

his modest and reserved, yet not aloof, demeanour, which concealed an acute capacity for observation and judgment, and a wealth of personal experience. Not only that, but I soon found myself unexpectedly honoured by his interest in my experience as a passionate rose gardener, something that in the years to come was of great moral support to me. Although our direct communications were limited to that fleeting encounter, at Chaalis, and second, at Mottisfont in 2014, I have always considered the messages I received from Girija as coming from both of them, because in my eyes one was and is inextricable from the other, as always happens in those exceptional unions where harmony and concord reign.

Over the years, following the introduction of his new hybrids and evaluating the cultivation experiences of many enthusiasts around the world, in gardens characterized like mine by high temperatures and often persistent drought has been very useful and immensely educational. The release of the book *Roses in the Fire of Spring*, which tells of such a rich personal experience, is certainly a treasure trove of information for everyone, not just for die-hard rose lovers.

To Viru and his intuition, we owe the opening of new pathways in contemporary hybridization, which over the many years of his work led to precious rediscoveries and authentic masterpieces. Among these, 'Faith Whittlesey' stands out as one of the ten most beautiful and reliable roses I've ever encountered.

Following the thread of his creations, it is easy to be guided on a fascinating journey, also made up of names that recall distant and unknown places, although I have never been to India, my mind cannot help but draw images of gardens, dotted with lush trees, draped with the long canes and sumptuous, yet graceful and delicate flowers of his *Rosa gigantea* hybrids, in an atmosphere imbued with sacredness.

Equally noteworthy are the names he has given to his creations, often honouring friends, prominent figures in the world of roses, or simple enthusiasts, often accompanying the name with an epithet that again does not fail to underline a special appreciation, highlighting a sharing of spirit, not just the mere interest in the same flower.

It is perhaps with the intent of surrounding myself once again with that generous affection that gardeners share with such enthusiasm, that I look forward to welcoming many of his creations into my garden: those that have yet to find a place here, certain they will continue to amaze me time and again.

Remembering Viru Viraraghavan : An Unforgettable Rosarian and Friend

Dr. (Mrs.) Meena Pimpalpure

Past President, Indian Rose Federation, 1991-1993

Past Vice President, World Federation of Rose Societies 2000-2003

Sagar Madhya Pradesh



The sudden and unexpected loss of a friend is always difficult to write about. More so when some of life's memorable times have been spent in their company. M.S. Viraraghavan, known to friends simply as 'Viru', is just such a person. His memories have a cherished and preeminent place in my life not just as a rosarian, but also as a friend, and I am sure that the same holds for the many whose lives he enriched with his vast treasure trove of knowledge, experience, and love for every facet of roses and the world of roses.

I entered the rose world as an amateur hobbyist in the seventies. When in 1978, I was invited by Justice K. K. Dubey and Col. Diddi of Jabalpur, for the first Rose Convention being held in Bombay under the aegis of the Indian Rose Federation, little did I imagine just how closely I

would get immersed and involved with the rose world, and how, just as naturally, my first meeting with Viru and his wife Girija would blossom into a life time of shared kinship and a treasured personal friendship.

Viru is counted amongst the most valued researchers and breeders in the international rose world. Yet he wore this mantle with a selfless ease and lightness that made even amateurs like me feel welcome and comfortable in his and Girija's presence. Their life with roses had started very early, alongside their

lifelong commitment to nature and environmental preservation. Their life interest in, and work with other flowers, apart from roses, like the rhododendron followed naturally from this innate passion and deep interest in all facets of the natural world. It is indeed a rarity to give up an important IAS position as a Collector, to embrace a life of relative solitude as a rose researcher and breeder as Viru did. In his whole hearted devotion and single minded dedication to his research and related field work, to me, Viru, and likewise Girja, seemed akin to ascetic practitioners in their quest for the perfect rose in warm climatic conditions. Despite Viru's many accomplishments and the related public accolades, his demeanour and interaction with people remained completely arrogance free. Viru and Girja shared a unique and supportive relationship in which both remained selflessly generous in sharing their vast knowledge and experience, as well as their infectious joy in working in this field.

My own relationship with Viru and Girja deepened with every rose convention we attended together. In the year 2000, I was privileged to serve as the Convenor for the first Asian Regional Conference of the World Federation of Rose Societies in Jaipur, which is mentioned in Viru and Girja's beautiful book '*Roses in the Fire of Spring*'. In that august gathering in Jaipur, Rajasthan State, the first of its kind to be held in Asia, we were invited for the next WFRS regional convention to be held in Houston, Texas, which we enthusiastically attended together the following year. Subsequently, we started attending all the annual WFRS Conventions held in different parts of the world together. Our trips together have left an indelible imprint on my mind, quite similar to the lingering fragrance of our favourite flower forever.

Viru was an impeccable researcher. He was the first person to conduct the in-depth study and research of *Rosa gigantea* and *Rosa chinophylla*. He was a successful pioneer in developing suitable rose varieties for warmer climates. Based on his research, Viru's well informed lectures during the World Rose Conventions gave a new direction and dimension to the thinking of rose breeders worldwide. As a ready learner, I, along with his audience, would try to absorb the lectures to enhance our own knowledge base. Viru's research and work is widely known and recognised, most recently through his book co-authored with Girja. But here, I am discussing Viru not just as an eminent rosarian but as the unique human being and friend that he was, a man of great intelligence and dedication, with a genuine sincerity, sensitivity, and simplicity of spirit and demeanour alike. In the rose convention held at Cape Town, South Africa, my husband who had accompanied me met Viru for the first time. He was deeply impressed by Viru for all these reasons and perhaps more, for the sum is somehow always greater than

the parts. And that in essence was Viru.

In 2003, I was devastated by the totally unexpected demise of my own husband at the relatively young age of 69. Bereft, and beset with the many business and familial responsibilities he had looked after so well in his lifetime, I started losing my own life interests, even in my beloved roses. With gentle and compassionate encouragement, Viru and Girija encouraged me to attend the 2006 Japanese Rose Convention with them. It has since become one of the most memorable and unforgettable times of my life. Viru's ready ability to absorb new learning's was much in evidence in Japan, where he started composing haikus. The brevity of this beautiful Japanese poetic form seemed somehow to mirror the compact perfection of a single rose in all its glory. The haiku he composed for his lecture ran thus.

My dream rose mocks me: Make me real

Doubly mocked

For only dream roses are real.

Viru's sudden passing has left a permanent void in the rose world which is impossible to fill. But for all those who knew him personally as an artifice free, affectionate and affable friend, a generous, sincere and compassionate friend, ever ready to share his knowledge, his absence is immeasurable. Girija's loss is shared deeply by me, and undoubtedly by all Viru's fans and friends. For all of us, he was and will continue to remain, quite simply, a legend in his own lifetime.

Dear Viru

Mia Grøndahl

Journalist, author, photographer,
Killaröset Trädgård Garden, Sweden



I open the door from my kitchen and go out into the greenhouse. The first plant that meets me is 'Mia Grøndahl'. I am, as always, happily confused to see the rose you named after me. I still haven't quite gotten used to being a rose. And that this beautiful rose is "me".

The first time I met you and your dear wife Girija was ten years ago in Hyderabad at the WFRS Regional Convention, though we had been earlier in correspondence about Rose Edward. After the conference I was invited to visit you in Kodaikanal, and as the taxi wound its way higher and higher up the mountain I was full of anticipation to

meet you, Girija and your roses. What I had seen in Hyderabad's rose gardens and public parks had shocked me. The roses needed to be sprayed several times a week with toxic chemicals so that they would not succumb to all kinds of attacks from insects and fungal diseases. Despite the heavy spraying, the roses still did not look healthy. Many could display large and beautiful flowers at the top of the stem, but most had lost their leaves and the branches shone bare. I remember thinking, Isn't this too high a price for both the rose and the environment to pay? And (at the risk that all rose lovers in India will hate me) 'Maybe people should grow flowers other than roses in the country's hot climate?'

Dear Viru, you made me understand that there is a future for the rose in India. You told me about your long research and breeding program. How you and Girija had set out in search of the wild roses *R. gigantea* and *R. chinophylla* whose healthy and strong genes when crossed with cultivated roses produce new and durable garden roses suitable for a life under the hot Indian sun.

You showed me around your and Guriya's beautiful and natural garden at 'Hillview' and introduced me to the roses you created. Each name carried a story, I understood, and often the rose was dedicated to a dear and important person. I met 'Rebecca's Choice', 'Helga's Quest', 'Blushing Yuki', 'Faith Whittlesey', and then there were the roses that had not yet had time to be tested and approved and were therefore still nameless. You told me in your kind and humble way that the life you chose with the roses and Guriya was a decision made with the heart, that the important thing for you was to live according to your feelings and not what was good from a financial and material point of view. A decision that had been made forty years ago and resulted in over a hundred new exciting and sustainable crosses between the wild roses and the cultivated ones. One rose in particular caught my attention. It climbed a pergola and had single, rather large pink flowers with a yellow white base. The rose belonged to the nameless group.

Sometime after I came back home to Sweden, I received an email from Guriya. Did I read that right? Did you really want the pink-blooming rose that I admired to bear my name? I felt enveloped by your and Guriya's great kindness, it felt as if you wanted me to be part of your world of roses and I was very touched, happy and grateful.

Dear Viru, every time I pass 'Mia Gröndahl' on the way through the greenhouse, I think of you. You were way ahead of your time when it came to producing healthy and sustainable roses. Perhaps it is only now, with an increasingly warmer climate, that our world will understand how important and significant your life's work is. Many are already grateful, and in time even more will understand that you, along with Guriya, gave the rose and us a chance to continue loving each other without harming our earth.

Finally, I would like to quote a few lines from the author Roland A. Browne:

"I don't know whether nice people tend to grow roses, or growing roses makes people nice."

I'm not sure if growing roses makes people nice (maybe), but I am certain of the first, that nice people tend to grow roses. You were living proof of that.

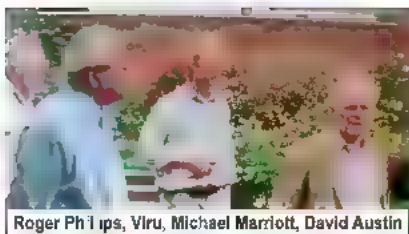
Dear Viru, you will forever be in my memory.

Mia



In Celebration of Viru Viraraghavan

Michael Marriott
Author, Rose Garden Designer
Retired as Senior Rosarian,
David Austin Roses, U.K.



Roger Phillips, Viru, Michael Marriott, David Austin

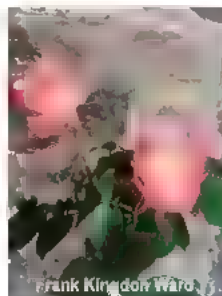
I will always remember Viru with great affection, as someone who always had a smile on his face. Being such a rose enthusiast and wanting to develop the best roses he could, he would always listen with great interest to any information he might be able to glean from a conversation. He came

across to me as a rather shy, retiring man who was very happy to be immersed in his world of roses. And, like the great majority of people in the horticultural world and especially the rose world, a very kindly man.

By mainly using the species *Rosa gigantea* and *R. clinophylla* (as well as a few others) Viru ensured that his varieties had a rather different and quite characteristic appearance. It also gave his roses the characters he wanted: suitability for tropical and subtropical climates, health and evergreen foliage.

The British climate is not the best for reaching the full potential of his roses but having grown the climber 'Frank Kingdon Ward' (who found *R. clinophylla* growing on the banks of the Irrawaddy in Burma, and *Rosa gigantea* in north east India) I can attest to it having the most beautiful, perfectly formed blooms of a soft, slightly peachy pink. In the tradition of the best rose breeders around the world though, he saw beauty in every shape of bloom from those with just 5 petals through the semi doubles, the classic hybrid tea to the fuller ones that are characteristic of the old roses.

Viru made great strides forwards in his breeding programme and through his roses will be remembered for a very long time by gardeners. He is sorely missed.



Viru Viraraghavan

Mike Shoup

Former owner Antique Rose Emporium

Texas, USA

Although a man of slight stature, he contrasts that with an inquisitive intensity that easily filled the room. I was immediately taken with him. I first met him and his wife Ginja during an international rose convention held in Houston way back in May of 2000. A tour of our nursery, The Antique Rose Emporium, was one of the break-out sessions that was provided to the attendees. I was elated that Viru participated. I showed him our "compost tea" brewer, a concept that I was enthralled with at the time. I was convinced that harnessing the diversity of aerobic microbes living in compost would alleviate the spraying of my roses with fungicide and insecticides that were considered necessary to grow healthy roses at the time. His line of questions showed the complexity of his scientific thought, exploring all aspects of this new application and adding additional insight into its usefulness. I shared my joy of collecting surviving roses from cemeteries and abandoned home sites (aptly named "Texas rose rustling"). He loved a rose we called 'Maggie', stating it looked exactly like a rose they found in India named 'Kakimada Red'. Both were being sold under study names as the identity has yet to be determined. It's a fascinating thought to think old roses have survived so many years and so many miles apart. But of greater joy for me was the discussion that followed on rose breeding. At the time I was toying with the idea of crossing old varieties of roses in favour of the show quality Hybrid Teas that the industry was overly infatuated with at the time.

He presented and cemented the idea for me that using species roses (*Rosa gigantea* and *Rosa clinophylla* in his case) were the answer to diversifying the rose gene pool and strengthening wild natural traits. Natural traits that included aspects like disease resistance, vigour, and fragrance that many Hybrid Teas were lacking. It was his genius. His roses were the new trendsetters. This idea of using species roses made sense to me and in my fledgling programme I embraced this wholeheartedly. Roses of strong vigorous constitution in Texas, (*Rosa setigera bracteata*, *palustris* and *laevigata*) were all employed. To date some of these crosses have created roses that have won awards within the AGRS trials.

But oh, back to his roses — seeing his climbers, large vigorous vines spilling over

arbours or trellises with ponderous flowers was the definition of romance to me and what a garden with roses should embody. I have come to think that roses have personality. Some roses are like Divas, stating that as you walk into their presence “don't you dare look at any other flowers, I am the only one worth looking at right now”. His Old-Tea like creations like 'Faith Whittlesey' and 'Naga Belle' (both AGRS trial winners) are a perfect example of this Diva personality. I personally like the dreamy romantic type roses. Viru's rose 'Maebara's Dream' or 'Mampur Magic' have flowers that swoon from their foliage, relaxed, and literally dripping down in graceful cascades. They are Climbing Roses whose petals fall from their languid pose along the side of the arbour or pergola. Flowers of many petals, so heavy in constitution that they would nod under their own weight. Under these roses you cannot help but reflect in the magic of the moment as the sun sets, and with a glass of wine in hand. He created roses for the garden with all their varied nature and more as if to say we are the most important and beautiful plants in the garden, we are the Empresses of the garden.

But Viru's greatest gift was that of his generosity.

His roses carry the names of people that he has met, not named to create a flashy commercial sale but that of his acquaintances and friends over the years – people that he has met, a fellow gardener, a rosarian, a president of a garden club. What a tribute and honour to be named for a rose, but even more so because of the man that shared it. Viru Viraraghavan.



From the right, unknown, Jean and Mike Shoup, Pat Toolan and Billy West listening to Viru, Mottisfont conference 2014



Kakinada Red

Mikinori Ogisu
Naturalist and Plant Explorer
Japan

Dear Guriya Viraraghavan,

Upon hearing the news of your husband's death, please accept my sincere condolences.

His death must be a tremendous loss for every rosarian

By the way, sometime before in 2023, Viru, your husband, wrote me by email that he wanted to give a cultivar name after me to a new rose cultivar he bred. The name was 'Mikinori Ogisu Plant Explorer'

The new variety was a hybrid with *Rosa chinensis f. spontanea* in its parentage, which was a species rediscovered by me in China in 1983. It was a result asked by Graham Stuart Thomas, OBE, the grand master of old garden roses, to find the species growing in the native habitat when I made a courtesy visit on him at that time.

Mr M S Viraraghavan (1937-2024), fondly called 'Viru', was a well-known and excellent horticulturist creating many new varieties of roses with you. His rose breeding was a distinctive one different from western breeders for cold hardy varieties. In his breeding method he used two Indian species, *Rosa gigantea* and *Rosa clinophylla*, creating ones suitable for warm climates.



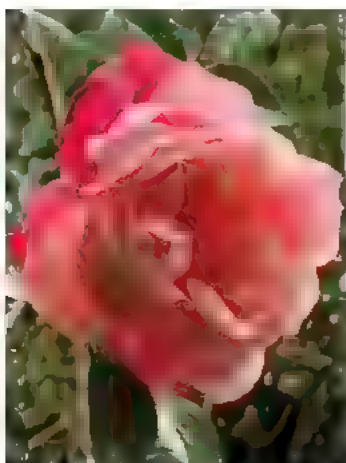
Mikinori Ogisu explaining to Viru and others
(He ga Brichet, Guriya, Lars-Ake Gustavsson Ilsten)

He also used *Rosa chinensis f. spontanea* for hybridization in his breeding scheme because the species was long lost one until my rediscovery, the news of which ran around among rose enthusiasts and experts. When Viru selected a good new variety from the seedlings, he asked me if I accept his offer that it would be named after me. I was very honoured to hear that, but I recommended him to do so after Graham S. Thomas who gave me an opportunity to rediscover it. Viru agreed to my proposal, and published the name 'Salute to Graham'. After that another new good one from seedlings came out. Then he told me again to accept his offer that it be named after me, and in turn, I honourably received it.

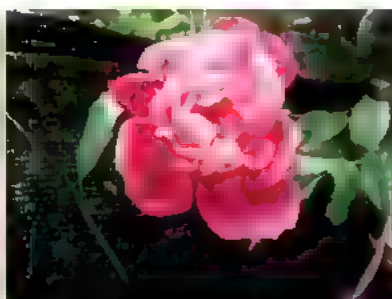
As a distinguished rosonian, his name and contributions will be remembered forever, and his rose varieties will continue to flourish in gardens worldwide. When Viru and you came to Japan for the World Rose Convention at Osaka in 2006, I met him and, I remember, was impressed by his enduring passion for rose breeding.

Best wishes,

Yours sincerely,



'Mikinori Ogisu, Plantsman Extraordinaire'



'Salute to Graham'

Master Viru Sir

Narendra Dadlani
President Bengal Rose Society
Kolkata and New Delhi

*"The gate of life swings to and fro,
Soon too soon, it closes
And that is why, besides my door,
I grow red roses"*

Thus wrote Viru Viraraghavan in his 'Memoriam' to the doyen of the Indian rose world, Dr B P Pal, on his death. I don't know what roses Viru planted beside his door, but his abode in Kodaikanal was full of roses of all kinds. His home was really a collection of roses, brought together from across the country and beyond. Those who have had the pleasure of visiting it would remember the long steep, winding paths, way above his bungalow. Everyone admired the ease with which Viru navigated these paths almost every day, looking at his plants, cajoling them, admiring them and looking for something new to create. His passion and energy in doing so could simply not be matched by those much younger than him.



It is incidental that the late Dr. Pal in his discussions with me one evening in early 1980s, mentioned about one Mr Viraraghavan, who had resigned his civil services position to follow his passion of rose growing. Truly admirable. Most of us work with roses, because we have to do it (in any research establishment) or for economic gains (in a nursery etc.) or just as a hobby. I haven't heard of anyone leaving his livelihood to pursue his dream of improving the roses we grow and admire, around us. On my mentioning this, Dr Pal gave me a paper by Viraraghavan from the Indian Rose Annual to read. His paper on 'Vermillion Rose' analysed well why most rose breeders of that era used roses of this popular shade which had yielded so many very popular roses of those times (Gloria Mundi, 'Baccara', 'Montezuma', 'Super Star', etc.). His in-depth analysis I found better than from some of my scientist colleagues and mentioned so to Dr Pal. He said 'one will hear more of this passionate rose breeder in the years to come'. How true! Viru Viraraghavan was to emerge as an eminent rose breeder across boundaries and a legend in India. It is a matter of coincidence that on my request, he named a rose 'The M.S. Swaminathan Rose' which was also vermillion. A disease resistant, shrub rose.

Someone deeply committed to breeding roses, better suited for our tropical climate, he mentioned that the possible vistas for rose hybridization for amateur rose breeders included breeding with *Rosa chinophylla*, unearthing the breeding potential of Rose Edward, breeding for disease resistance, developing new roses (blue, brown, hand painted strains, etc.), roses with variations in plant habit like climbers for the plains and miniflora roses. He remained involved with these till the end. He was the first one (perhaps the only one) to follow the writings of Sir George Watt and Sir Henry Collett and sought out the *Rosa chinophylla* and *Rosa gigantea* from Manipur (Sirohi), Mount Abu etc. with the help of his rose friends Narendra Singh, Dr N.C. Sen, and others. Viru named roses after these persons. 'What a way to acknowledge the support'. Viru, while calling *R. chinophylla* (*R. involucrata*) and *R. gigantea* the 'Aristocrats of the Rose World', also felt that many other *Rosa* species like *R. macrophylla*, Musk rose (*R. longicuspis*, *R. leschenaultiana*), *R. webbiana*, *R. sericea*, *R. eglanteria* (*R. rubiginosa*), *R. laevigata* (Cherokee Rose), *R. banksiae*, *R. bracteata*, *R. foetida*, among others, had a lot to contribute to the development of modern roses, particularly to better adaptability. The two approaches, he recommended to the young breeders were evolving heat tolerant strains, starting with standard modern roses like *Montezuma* or heritage roses e.g. 'Gruss an Teplitz', which have reportedly given good performance in warm climates, and breeding with the tropical *Rosa* species like *R. chinophylla* or *R. gigantea*.

'Of all flowers, methinks a rose is best' (William Shakespeare)

Something which deeply disturbed me at that time, till I understood it well and realized it was true, was his writings that rose may not remain the world's most popular flower. He advocated use of new bloodlines and focus on the beauty of rose as a plant and not just as a flower. He said we should aim to develop roses for pergolas, arches and fences, roses with evergreen foliage, disease resistance, focus on petal texture to withstand the climate here, vigour, better and different colour range, fragrance, more acceptable plant habit (miniatures, shrubs with wider adaptation), patio teas, etc. He always felt that there has to be a separate line for breeding for warm climate like ours. Later he also mentioned developing an evergreen rose, striving for sustainability in rose growing. He felt that keeping in view our warm climate, where disease problems are rampant we should breed disease resistant lines, where maintenance is easy without adverse environmental impact. He advised that we shouldn't strive for immunity, but look for plants possessing the capacity to recover from infection without the use of chemicals. It's heartening to note that many of the new rose breeders in the country are focussing on breeding for disease resistance, besides other characters.

In one of his papers long back, Viru mentioned that *'The future of the rose is and will become increasingly more dependent on amateur rose hybridization, backed up by the support of rose societies throughout the world'*. How true was his thinking nearly 40 years ago, at least for most of the world. In India, for instance, very few instances come to mind of commercial breeders. He was of the opinion that all long term objectives in rose breeding can be taken up by the commercial rose breeders with lot of resources of germplasm and the like.

Viru felt that the main challenge for us was getting Indian roses accepted by the Indian rose public. While many of his own roses have performed well in other countries and are available in several countries, how many nurseries in India stock them? Truly, in India, we still ask in the nursery for a red or a pink or a yellow rose or best ask for a standard modern rose from other countries, which were bred for cold hardiness. Most nurseries have hundreds of new varieties from abroad, but hardly any Indian variety, even though I am told there are more than 2000 Indian varieties bred by us.

Viru (with Guriya) wrote many articles in the Indian Rose Annual on practically every subject. His papers related to the scent of roses, rose pigments, his own challenges of breeding better roses for India, and many more. All these will remain pieces of education for all of us. He (with Guriya) edited the Rose Annual for nearly three decades, making it a much sought after rose information guide in the country.

When Viru compiled his efforts of more than five decades, creating more than a hundred new rose varieties in a range of colour, shape and size, and published his book 'Roses in the Fire of Spring', I was privileged to receive a signed copy (a real treasure) I wrote reviews of this book in *Indian Horticulture* of ICAR and *Floriculture Today* (the only Indian magazine dedicated to flowers) It was truly a challenge, writing about the work of someone who was known for his painstaking and meticulous attention to every detail concerning the rose I also had the honour of talking to him and his rose (soul) mate Gurja, for whom he named one of his early roses with an obvious name 'Priyatama', at Pune Each session with the couple was always a new lesson in education about the world of roses

We will miss him as the years pass, we will realise how fortunate, indeed blessed we were to have him among us during our own years of our tryst with roses As the famed rosarian, Jack Harness once said for his friend rosarian Alec Cocker *A person whose heart was wrapped up strung knotted and posted off to the Goddess of new roses* The very modest, easily accessible to all rose lovers, regarded for his unflappable graciousness, always attentive and receptive, Viru will always be remembered for his constant efforts to improve and enhance the beauty of the rose by his imaginative hybridization, transforming rose improvement in India We addressed him as Viru, Mr Viraraghavan, Uncle, Sir, etc What was he actually to all of us? Recently, one of his mentees, Sanjoy Mukherjee named one of his latest creations as 'Legendary Viru Sir' One of the parents of this tribute was 'Rock Star' That's what Viru was to acolytes like me, a Rock Star



Nimet Monasterly Gilbert
Past Editor of BAON (By Any Other Name)
the WFRS Journal on heritage roses, France

I attempted to set my memories of Viru down on paper. Silly ones of watching the two of you scramble down a hill in China, his memories of kite flying, of meals shared ("green AGAIN!"), your gracious hospitality. It finally became too confusing, who to mention and who one has forgotten (and hence offend). In the end I started all over again.

Seeds in the Wind ~ Viru's legacy

***"...Two roads diverged in a wood, and I took the one less travelled by, and that has made all the difference."* Robert Frost**

I will leave to others from throughout the botanical world to write their homages justly deserved - and confine myself to personal recollections of how those sparkling eyes so well described in their memoirs of the first time Viru and Ginja met and which said so much about the person Viru was and hope that this might trigger memories of your own. The twinkle in Viru's eyes remained throughout his lifetime and it is hard to pick among all my memories which best depict his many attributes and I have found this an impossible task as there have been so



Viru and Nimet Monasterly Gilbert, Kunming Botanical garden, China, 2016

many ranging over the years and countries. But if like me, you noticed his excitement when finding an *in situ* rose he had read about, his eyes sparkling at the accomplishments of others and with Girja's research he named so many of his hybrids as tributes to long forgotten explorers and to friends. His generosity knew no bounds as he willingly shared his finding and creations throughout the world and sadly few remembered the question of royalties. But as always he was gracious and forgiving for he was a true gentleman. His eyes expressed so much about him, concern, worry and joy. He could also be impish and naughty but never at the expense of others. It is like trying to count dandelions in a huge field before the wind blows all the seeds away. But like those wind-swept seeds, Viru's life touched so many of us and will continue for generations to come, thanks to the roses he hybridized. Viru, it was an honour to count on you as a friend and may your example lead me to follow in your footsteps.

Viru's Glorious Legacy

Dr Nobuo Shirasuna PhD

Landscape designer and architect

Professor at Kobe International University,

Japan



Nobuo Shirasuna Flanked by Maebara (Left) and us (Right), Acao Garden, Japan 2019

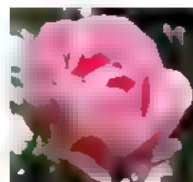
Viru was a devoted seeker of new rose varieties. His appearance was that of a sage who had attained a deep understanding of the world, earning him profound respect from rose enthusiasts around the globe. Unlike other breeders, his approach to cultivating new varieties was 'unique' he used wild species to create his roses

In general, rose breeding is driven by a commercial perspective, with the goal of producing roses that appeal to the general public. Breeding using wild species is extremely difficult due to genetic differences, and it was rarely attempted. However, Viru discovered *Rosa gigantea*, a wild species native to India, and took on the significant challenge of cultivating new rose varieties suited to India's unique climate. This achievement was the result of his immense effort and brought a fresh perspective to the world of roses.

Traditional rose breeding involved crossing existing varieties to create new ones, but the possibilities had largely been exhausted, leading to a certain sense of monotony. However, Viru brought a fresh perspective to rose breeding, which had become driven by commercialism. By using wild species as parent plants, he established a technique that unlocked new possibilities for roses, opening up a new path in the world of breeding.

In addition to India's *Rosa gigantea*, Viru also created new varieties using Japan's wild species, such as *Rosa hirtula* and *Rosa laevigata*. Ideally, this work should have been undertaken by Japanese breeders. However, as a pioneer, Viru fulfilled this role and showed the way to breeding roses uniquely suited to Japan's climate. We hope that, like Viru, Japanese breeders will continue to use wild species as parent plants, leading to the creation of beautiful, uniquely Japanese roses.

With heartfelt respect and admiration for Viru.



Nobuo Shirasuna
Landscape Supreme

My Rose Round Robin Friend, Viru

Odile Masquelier

La Bonne Maison

France

Viru and I were both members of "The Old Rose Round Robin" created by William A. Grant (famous Californian rosarian) so that passionate people around the world could exchange ideas and cuttings. We first met in Florence (Tuscany) while visiting a friend. And at Viru's demand, I organised a visit to the rose collection of Professor Fineschi!

We then met several times at Kodaikanal and in Lyon at La Bonne Maison, my house and garden. I discovered Viru's fabulous knowledge and passion concerning Indian Species Roses and the way to enhance them. He was also very preoccupied by the local native trees and the necessity to keep them alive, in good shape.

A few days after our meeting in Tuscany, he wrote in my guest book at La Bonne Maison, "After seeing your garden, Girja and I understand more clearly why the rose is the Queen of flowers!"

Later, visiting each other, we exchanged cuttings and memories of new gardens we had visited. And he taught me how to bud (graft) roses.

Girja and Viru are more than friends. They are as close to us as members of our family.

I feel extremely happy that I had the opportunity to meet Viru and that he certainly became a very dear friend.



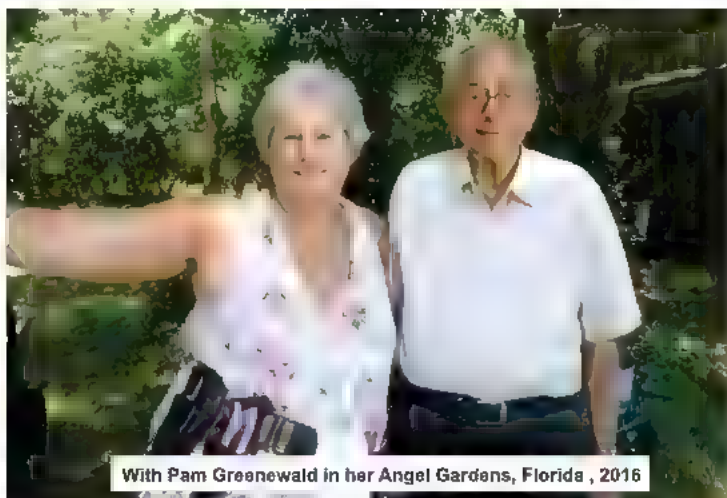
With Odile Masquelier, 2012 Heritage Rose Conference, Sakura Japan

Memorial Garden Dedication to M.S. 'Viru' Viraraghavan at Angel Gardens

Rose Nursery, Alachua, Florida, USA, May 4th, 2024

Pam Greenewald
Angel Gardens Rose Nursery
Florida USA

Co-Sponsored by the Heritage Roses Group and the Jacksonville Rose Society, hosted by Pamela and James Greenewald of Angel Gardens, 50 rose lovers came together on a breezy, sunny day in North Central Florida this past May to honour the memory of world renowned rose breeder 'Viru' Viraraghavan. He passed away on December 20th, 2023. His cherished wife and companion, Girja, helped to spark interest from her social media platform for the event, calling her many friends from everywhere to attend. What made the day so special were several items. First, we were blessed by the appearance of Girja's own brother, Karti Sandilya and his wife Indra who flew south from Washington DC. Driving up from Orlando with them were Viru and Girja's son and daughter in law, Vijay and Susan Raghavan from Louisville, Kentucky. We all felt the spirit of the honorees through these delightful relatives who told stories, took photos, and cut the ribbon for the garden dedication. It would not have been the same without



With Pam Greenewald in her Angel Gardens, Florida , 2016

them and we are very grateful they were able to make the trip. One very moving story was told by Karti of the time his sister and Viru visited them in Washington DC. They went to the National Arboretum which they found to be closed. The Director, who was at the Reception Desk asked them to sign their name in the Visitor's Book anyway. When he realized it was M S Viraraghavan, he exclaimed, "We have some of your roses here at the Arboretum! Let me show you!" The small party was then escorted all around the gardens on a Private Tour given personally by the Director.

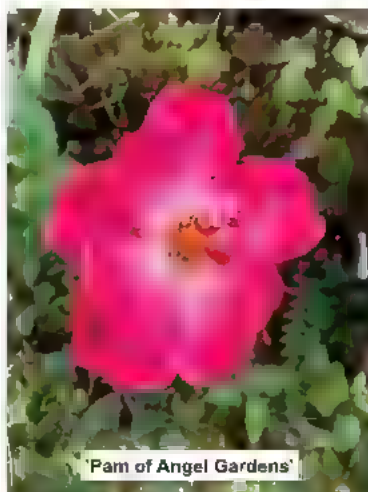
The morning began with group pictures and walking through the rose gardens and nursery. Priya Vardheesh drove 4 hours from Fort Pierce to be there as Viru was her mentor and became "like family" when she had spent time in India working in agriculture. Dressed in her traditional sari, it gave the day the flavour it needed to complete the picture. Several tents covered the participants from the Florida sun and the stage was set. Pamela from Angel Gardens started the program by welcoming the out of town guests as well as the local ones. She told of how the garden had originally been intended to be a dedication to the Viru roses before he had passed away. He and Girija had hoped to be present for this occasion to which plans had begun a year before. But alas now it was a Memorial Garden dedication as its main personality was no longer with us. Pamela relayed phone messages from a great friend Nimet Monasterly Gilbert, from France, who said other friends from France, Becky and John Hook and Helga Brichet of Italy all wished they could be there. Nimet had Pamela give this message to Vijay: "Your father Viru was a magical force not only for roses but for all those who were fortunate to have met him. He was so very fortunate to have Girija by his side and between them they formed links throughout the world of plant lovers."

Their brand new fabulous book was presented and copies were made available for sale. A beautiful plaque was presented with Viru's picture and some pieces of quotes from the book: "The Bird of Time has but a little way to fly" and "More Divine our nature grows in the Eden of the rose."

It was reminded that May 4th was also 'World Naked Gardening Day' and that clothes were optional at the event (although all chose to keep their clothes on!). Next was a presentation of some Rosaries handmade by Johanna Birney. She had visited Angel Gardens a month before and had collected many petals from Viru's roses in order to craft a special rosary for Girija. She explained how the rosaries are made with cheesecloth and mashed up rose petals. It was fascinating to say the least. Then she presented Vijay with the rosary for his mother made from Viru's roses with a rose quartz bead between each rose bead, 108 in all. Also she had made a smaller rosary with 27 giant beads for Vijay. And last (but not least)

she had made a rosary for Pamela too. This was a real treat for all as one could smell the rose fragrance from the beads' (Email johanna.burney@gmail.com if interested). Next was the official Ribbon Cutting performed by Susan, wife of Vijay. Vijay, Karti and Indira were also there to help. The garden roses are not big yet but give them time. There are several arbours and a Victorian gazebo to grow the roses on. Names are displayed on black plastic markers with white liquid chalk. Here is a list of roses planted in the garden or will be: 'Aussie Sixer', 'Karrie's Rose', 'Faith Whittlesey', 'Amber Cloud', 'Pam of Angel Gardens', 'Maura la Cava', 'Ivory Chalice', 'Pat Shanley', 'Lanique Rose', 'Remembering Cachet', 'Pat Henry', 'Stephen's Dream', 'Kindly Light', 'Helga's Quest', 'Jay Hiers', 'Naga Belle', 'Emina', 'Sakura Sunset', 'Lotus Born', 'Dr. Malcolm Manners', 'Twilight Tryst', 'Ajatashatru Kasturi', 'The M. S. Swaminathan Rose', 'New Blush', 'Lyndy's First Love', 'Spice Trail', 'Sheenagh Harris', 'Ahimsa', 'Antia's Rosy Touch', 'Rose Legend Akira Ogawa', 'Vanamali', 'Kanyakumari', 'Priyatama', 'Krishna's Peach', 'Jeri's Purple Jewel', 'Garnet Crest', 'Sergio Rose Savant', 'Achantia', and 'E. K. Janaki Ammal'.

After the presentation of the Rosaries, we took a break to eat a delicious catered meal by Radha's Kitchen, a vegetarian catering company in Alachua. The meal consisted of mushroom rice, cucumber raita, salad, ginger mint lemonade, and chocolate cookies. Pamela's right hand lady, Corbe, produced 50 Rose Apple Tea Cakes which were to die for! After and during lunch, special guest speaker Stephen Hoy (who had driven down from Warner-Robbins, Georgia, for the day), presented a wonderful program about some of the more single-petalled varieties of Viru. He told stories of each rose as he showed its picture on a poster board. He was able to give the histories of these roses and what became clear during his talk was the fact that so many of the roses were named for Viru and Gurja's friends in the rose world. What a shining legacy by which each will be remembered! After the talk, the group wandered through the gardens and nursery, making purchases, smelling the roses and having more good times. It was truly a special day, naked or not!



Viru as I knew him

Pat Henry
Roses Unlimited Nursery
South Carolina USA



With Pat Henry and Bill Patterson of Roses Unlimited Nursery, and Gene Waering (left)

In my garden and home, Viru was always a welcome visitor, happy to interact with me and eager to share his knowledge of roses but it was never all about him.

On a trip to California 2006, where Viru was being honoured as 'Great Rosarian of the World', I enjoyed a friendship with him and Grijja.

Viru had a sense of humor that I shall not forget. My friend and I were to leave after the award function to catch our flight from Palm Springs, California back to the East Coast, to my home in Laurens, South Carolina. After many complications and misadventures we finally managed to leave with Viru calling out to us as we left. 'It's Palm Spring, or bust!'

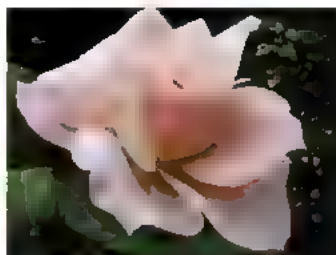
He was always respected wherever we were.

Viru and Grijja gave me the exciting chance to have an international friendship with roses.

Growing in my garden today are Viru roses to forever remind me of him and his beautiful work in his life with roses.



With Pat Henry



'Pat Henry', 'Narender' in India
(Named for Narender Singh of Ranchi)

Memories of Viru

Pat Shanley

Founding Chairman, American Garden Rose Selections™ (AGRST™)

Past President, American Rose Society, 2015-2018

New York, USA



I first met Viru and Girja in 2005. They came to New York to present a programme to the members of the Manhattan Rose Society and the Long Island Rose Society. Manhattan Rose Society's meeting was held at The Horticultural

Society of New York in New York City. Everyone was very excited to meet them and Viru's program was well received. Manhattan Rose Society Board of Directors hosted a dinner for Viru and Girja and it was a lovely evening filled with lots of rose conversation.

Viru and Girja spent two nights in Manhattan at the Yale Club, which my late husband, John Shanley, had reserved for them. After their visit in New York City, they came to my home in Locust Valley, Long Island, and spent a few nights with us.

The night of the Long Island Rose Society meeting, Gene Waering and I took them to dinner and then I drove all of us to the Plainview Library for Viru's presentation. On the way, there was much lively conversation and somewhere along the line I took a wrong turn. As I back tracked to get us on the right route, I told them we might be late for the meeting. The look on Viru's face told me all I needed to know about getting there on time. After a harrowing car ride, we made it, with only minutes to spare!

Viru's presentation centred on his rose breeding program and the members were fascinated. Here was someone who had traveled halfway around the world, from India, to speak to them! It was an amazing meeting.

Later that evening at my home, we sat together and laughed about our journey and getting lost along the way. I was glad that we could laugh about it! Viru spoke at length to my late husband, John, about his work in breeding rhododendrons. In

our home, I was the rose person and John was the rhododendron person. Viru gave the gift of his knowledge for both our passions.

In 2006, Viru and Girja received the Great Rosarians of the World™ Award (GROW™) at the Huntington Botanical Garden, Pasadena, CA. In 2007, the Great Rosarians of the World™ event went bicoastal, with the extension of the program from California to New York. At the persistent recommendation of Gene Waering, the Manhattan Rose Society agreed to host the programme and GROW™ East was born. I agreed to chair the programme. Viru and Girja were present for many of the GROW™ East events, from the beginning to our last event, in 2016. I remember how much the participants enjoyed meeting and discussing roses with them. They were Rose Royalty and we were honored to have them with us.

In 2013, I joined Gene, Viru and Girja on a Road Trip of Roses. We began in Jacksonville, Florida, where we met with the Jacksonville Rose Society. Viru presented a programme to the members and we were all treated to a wonderful dinner at Club Continental, owned by Karrie Massee, Jacksonville Rose Society member. Next stop was a visit with US Ambassador Mrs. Faith Whittlesey in Winter Haven, Florida, who was kind enough to host us at her home. We then drove to Orangeburg, South Carolina to visit the ARS (American Rose Society) Species Garden and the American Garden Rose Selections™ (AGRST™) trial gardens, both located at the beautiful Edisto Memorial Gardens. There we met with our good friend, Jay Hiers, Superintendent of Parks for Orangeburg, who showed us through the gardens after which we enjoyed a wonderful dinner together. We also visited Gene's sister, Chris, in Asheville, North Carolina, who also hosted us at her beautiful home. Beautiful gardens, beautiful roses, good friends and good food! It was an amazing trip and we loved every minute of it.

Viru was a brilliant man for whom roses were more than just a passion, they were his life's work. I am fortunate to call him my friend and to have one of his roses named for me. We are the benefactors of his brilliant hybridizing program and the world is richer for having had him with us.

In addition to his beautiful roses, what I remember most about Viru is his wonderful sense of humour and his joyous laugh. He was a joy to be with and that joy was infectious, as was his love of roses. He was a kind and gentle soul who understood the world needs more peace and beauty and his roses gave that to us. He is greatly missed.



M. S. 'Viru Viraraghavan': My Memories

Pat Toolan

'Heritage Roses in Australia' (HRIA) Association

Angaston Australia



I first met Viru and Girja when they came to South Australia in 2001 to the Heritage Roses in Australia Hahndorf conference where Viru gave the first Rumsey Memorial Lecture. The late South Australian rose identity David Ruston had told the conference planning committee

that Viru and Girja must be invited. Viru gave a very interesting talk on warm climate rose breeding and showed us many stunning photographs of his beautiful new varieties and seedlings. Girja also gave an enlightening talk on rose products which was fascinating. The Australian members who attended the conference were thrilled that the Viraraghavans had been invited and that we had a chance to speak with them both. I had limited time at this conference and so I was only able to observe Viru and Girja giving their lectures.

In 2014 we were able to share time during the Heritage Rose Foundation heritage rose conference in Mottisfont UK where we celebrated the retiring of head gardener David Stone who had been in charge of the Graham Stuart Thomas inspired heritage rose garden. Viru was one of the invited speakers and his presentation 'Stumbling Behind the Master' highlighted Viru's breeding desire to follow the Thomas statement that if the Noisettes were given more colour they would take the world by storm.

During the 2016 WFRS pre-conference trip to Yunnan province in China we shared time together as we visited this remarkable area.

To be together scrambling up a rocky and wet incline at the Alpine Botanical Garden near Lijiang and meeting the 'Lijiang Road Rose Rambler' which was first introduced to western society by Roger Phillips and Martyn Rix was a shared joy and thrill. Later we were overjoyed to see fine old well-maintained examples of this rose lining the streets of Lijiang, a heritage tribal town.

I will remember Viru Viraraghavan as a kind, considerate, studious, quiet, respectful, remarkable rose friend whose friendship I will always treasure and remember with love.

My Interaction with Viru

Paul Zimmerman

Paul Zimmerman Roses LLC.

Consulting and Design, Author, Rose Travel Guide

Asheville USA

My fondest memory of Viru was when he and Girja came to Biltmore some years ago. This was during the time of the Biltmore International Rose Trials. They were in the country ((USA) and wanted to see the well known gardens of Biltmore House in Asheville, and of course meet me, as I was the Curator of the Rose Garden, and have a visit. This was my first chance to spend some time with them both. I'd known of Viru's roses for years — mainly through Roses Unlimited Nursery in South Carolina. Their book *Roses In the Fire of Spring* is a wonderful picture into what Viru was trying to accomplish with his rose breeding. And he succeeded. During that day at Biltmore we spent time wandering among the roses, discussing the garden and all things roses. Then for lunch we were delighted to discover all three of us are vegetarian. Luckily Asheville, North Carolina, has many great choices and our visit concluded over a nice long vegetarian lunch!

Remembering Viru

Peter Harkness
Harkness Roses
Letchworth Garden City
U K.

The sad news of Viru's passing has deprived the rose world not only of a delightful and knowledgeable gentleman, but also of an inspiring contributor to the genus. As a breeder, he realised his vision of bringing the genes of *Rosa gigantea* and *R. chinophylla* and other species more fully into the mainstream. The many awards he received, in his lifetime, from across the world, for his over 120 creations reflect the success of his achievement.

Viru and Girija were blessed with sixty three years of marriage and two children. I found him, in the many times we met, over the years, a modest, gifted gentleman, eager to share his lifetime knowledge and experience. I was happy to have been present, in February 2016, on the occasion of the planting of the rose 'Frank Kingdon Ward' a *Rosa gigantea* climber, bred by Viru, in the churchyard in Grantchester, near Cambridge, where the great plant hunter is buried.

He and Girija edited the Indian Rose Annual for many years, and recently they published an account of their global travels entitled 'Roses in the Fire of Spring', giving the world a lasting insight into their enduring love of this most favoured flower.



Viru and Peter Harkness, in his Hitchin Nursery UK, 1991

Viru

Peter Knox Shaw

Teacher, academic, author and Master Gardener

Fresh Woods, Elgin

South Africa

It was at the Chelsea Flower Show in the spring of 1995 that Barbara and I first met Viru and Girija. We found a quiet spot away from the crowds, far from the tent and at some distance from the band, where we spread a rug on the grass. Though we had corresponded for a couple of years with the Viraraghavans through a Round Robin which focussed particularly on roses in the wild, we were quite unprepared for the excitement that lay ahead. While we chomped on our sandwiches and Viru and Girija spoke in turn about their field trips in search of species roses that were rarely seen, the tartan rug turned slowly into one of those Persian carpets of legend that waft the enchanted to distant lands.

More than a decade before our meeting Viru had taken the bold decision to leave his high-ranking job in the civil service to develop what had been a long-standing interest. This was not simply a matter of taking early retirement: it was a decision in line with that sort of commitment that Andrew Marvell celebrated in his



With Barbara and Peter Knox Shaw in their Fresh Woods, Elgin, S.Africa garden, 2019

famous poem 'The Garden', where a life single mindedly devoted to the hunt for public fame, to the winning of 'the palm, the oak, or bays', is compared to the abundant joy of a life dedicated to the pursuit of beauty and spiritual fulfilment.

Viru's decision to make this break took courage and conviction, but its hugely successful outcome owed much to the fact that his new life represented in a continuation rather than a severance with the old. To his programmes for rose breeding he brought that thoroughness and grasp of detail that he had exercised in high office, and his command of the genetic complexities involved in effective hybridising drew on his academic background in chemistry. But Viru was as much an artist as a scientist and the essays he wrote during the 1980s (easily available online) unfold as a kind of manifesto for what he would later achieve. He understood that the long reign of the Hybrid Tea had led to stalemate in the world of rose breeding and saw that the way ahead lay with amateurs and specialist societies rather than with the 'Big Boys' who were reluctant to stray from well trodden paths. He recognized above all that the incorporation of new species in breeding was what made for dynamic development, often quoting Kordes's remark that the 'soup ladle will bring out only what is in the tureen'. His love of two native species, *R. gigantea* and *R. chinophylla* famously steered him towards creating cultivars that would be 'summer hardy' rather than winter tolerant, content in hot conditions rather than Eurocentric in their orientation. The roses that Viru produced from these two species alone have ensured his place on the world stage, and global warming can only increase their fame.

Viru and Girja became important contributors to the international rose scene towards the end of the nineties and when they came to Cape Town for the WFRS conference of 2002, we were lucky to have them as guests. We had a glorious week that spring, visiting garden after garden, as well as seeking out indigenous flowers in the veld. Their range of interest in plants was as wide and voracious as their responsiveness to everything else, and their vitality and humour made them the best company in the world. We saw them again on their visit to South Africa in 2019, and these are times we will always remember.

On his last visit Viru budded six of his roses on our stock, and they all took, though only 'Helga's Quest', an exquisite plant named after Helga Brichet that outdoes even 'Clementina Carbonieri' in apricot intensity, has really thrived. Our rather freakish misty upland variation on the Mediterranean climate seems, alas, not to suit the *chinophylla* clan. But seed of Sir George Watt's form of *gigantea* gathered by Viru and Girja from Manipur in 1991 from an altitude of 7000 feet took to us like a duck to water, and has since produced some wonderful swans. Nature has always smiled on Viru's work.

Meeting Viru

Ping Lim

Director of Ornamental Plant Research, Altman Plants
San Diego, California USA



With Ping Lim , Nanyang, China, 2019

Many people might know that Viru and Giriya are quite popular in the rose circle, but for me . until I missed a couple of chances to meet them in Oregon and Texas they have always been surrounded by the fans of roses, that kept me at a distance. I, too, have been so much interested in roses since growing up in Laos. We also call Rose "Gulaab" and it sounds

exactly the same as in Hindi (गुलाब) When I knew Viru and Giriya were coming to town, I was so eager to know how roses could be growing in India, which is as warm and humid as my own country, Laos. My chance of meeting Viru and Giriya suddenly came at the 2019 Nanyang, China rose convention as they were the speakers and were speaking before my presentation.



Ping L'm discussing with Viru, Nanyang, China, 2019

That was our first meeting face to face, and it just simply seemed like seeing a long-time friend, no need to be introduced and no need to be polite, Viru called me 'Ping' in an affectionate tone. Of course, our conversations were not just roses but beyond ..

Since most modern roses were bred from the northern colder zone regions such as Europe and USA, many roses do not really perform well in the warmer zones, and that was one of the reasons for Viru and Girija to initiate a rose breeding program for the warmer tropical regions

According to my reading, many of his roses were created as his goals for tolerance to heat stress. Besides *Rosa climophylla*, he used quite a lot of *Rosa gigantea* in his breeding work, not just for adaptability to the 'warm' climate but also for fragrance and graceful flower forms. He reached his dream remarkably to let all mankind especially for the tropical zones to share and enjoy roses without much care and disappointment

Viru would never be alone on his paths in roses period. He has sparked his love to reach out to the world of beauty without borders which is appreciated by many of us

I do miss Viru!

The Legacy of a 'Rose-Man'

Rahul Kumar
Past Vice President Indian Rose Federation
New Delhi



Mr M S. Viraraghavan holds a very special place in my heart, both as a mentor and a guiding figure in the rose-growing community. His influence on the world of roses was not only through his incredible expertise but also through his warmth, generosity, and genuine character. Calm, stable, and always smiling, he was a master of his craft, but more importantly, he was a deeply kind and humane individual. My first meeting with him in 2014 felt like the culmination of a long journey, as he had been an inspiration to me from afar for many years. Meeting him in person brought that inspiration to life, and his impact on my work and life has been

immeasurable. The bond we shared felt like that of a son to a father, and his legacy continues to inspire me and countless others. Mr Viraraghavan truly embodied the title of "Rose Man" period. Not only did he nurture roses, but he also nurtured the people around him who shared his passion. His contributions to rose cultivation were vast, and his guidance to the community has left an enduring legacy. I fondly remember addressing him and his wife, Girija, as "Sir" and "Madam," until one day Girija gently asked me to call them 'Uncle' and 'Auntie.' That simple request showed the humility that defined them both, and it made me feel even more connected to them. I was thrilled when they called me to visit my rose garden, and on October 29, 2017, they came to my home. Despite being over 80 years old, even the long climb up to the fourth floor could not keep him from his love of roses. I will never forget the joy on their faces as they admired my collection. Their appreciation of the care and cleanliness of my garden filled me with pride, and I felt deeply honoured by their visit.

Viru's journey with roses began when he was 18 years old, but it truly took off in 1955 when he first saw the 'Julien Potin' rose in full bloom. His love for roses grew alongside his distinguished career in government service, which he eventually left in 1980 to fully dedicate himself to rose breeding. Over the years, Viru became known for creating disease resistant, 'evergreen' roses that could thrive in India's tropical and subtropical climates. His passion for roses drove him to experiment and create roses that would survive and flourish in the country's unique conditions. One of the things that struck me most about Viru was his dedication to sharing his knowledge and passion with others. He didn't just create roses; he built relationships and inspired a community of rose lovers. He was honoured with the Lifetime Achievement Award at the World Regional Rose Conference in 2020 for his exceptional contributions to rose breeding across India, a testament to his lifelong dedication to this art.

In 2022, Viru and Grijja published *Roses in the Fire of Spring: Better Roses for a Warming World, and Other Garden Adventures*, which chronicled their lifelong journey with roses and other plants. The book received widespread praise, and it was a fitting tribute to a lifetime of passion and hard work. Sadly, Viru passed away unexpectedly on December 20, 2023. His death came as a shock to all of us, as he had not been seriously ill. Despite his passing, his spirit and influence continue to bloom through the lives and gardens of those who knew him. I consider myself incredibly fortunate to have known him, learned from him, and shared in his passion for roses and life. His legacy will always remain close to my heart, as will the lessons he imparted to me. Salute to the forever guardian of the Indian rose family.



Admiring Rahul Kumar's terrace garden

Remembering a Superstar: Our Dear Friend Viru Viraraghavan

Ramrao and Chandralekha Jagtap and the entire Jagtap Family

Jagtap Nursery

Past President Indian Rose Federation 2006-9

Pune Maharashtra

Our first meeting with M.S. (Viru) Viraraghavan was in Mumbai in 1978. This meeting was attended by top rose growers in India and it was here that the seeds of forming the Indian Rose Federation were first sown. It was at this meeting that M.S. Viraraghavan impressed upon everyone present, his formidable experience as a top bureaucrat as well as his immense knowledge and love for roses. During those early years we were at the beginning of our own rose journey and Viru, as we later called him fondly, would inspire and guide us on my journey.

What impressed us most was his systematic approach. Each discussion with him was a learning experience. Each sentence on roses was the gospel truth. Viru's articles in the Indian Rose Annual were very well written and researched.

After 1985 Viru and Girja both took over the responsibility of publishing the Indian Rose Annual. Work on the Annual would begin every July with the final



With Ramrao and Chandralekha Jagtap, Jaipur Convention, 1999

printing being done by the year end. These six months were a period of continuous follow up with rose experts from all over the world. Screening the articles and compiling the Rose Annual is not an easy task. Both Viru and Girja did this adeptly and with finesse.

Viru's breeding work with roses was fundamental. He did what no other modern rose breeder in India had ever done. He went back to the species roses. The use of *Rosa chinophylla* as a parent for making heat resistant hybrids was a unique approach. It is also a very difficult one. Not being one to shy away from challenges, Viru's work with *Rosa chinophylla* and *Rosa gigantea* is ground breaking.

His choice of residence at Kodakanal was with the specific intention of being able to grow and breed roses. For growing and testing roses in warmer climates Viru and Girja had a farm in Hosur near Bangalore. We had the pleasure of visiting both the farms. It was a special privilege to see the various rose hybrids along with a wide range of other plants about which both Viru and Girja had in-depth knowledge.

Viru's and Girja's love for roses took them to see beautiful rose gardens and roses around the world. During these extensive travels they met thousands of people who were as impressed with the couple as we were. Each and every person they met considered them as his/her closest friends and part of their family.

Over the years we were fortunate enough to have spent time with Viru. He has visited all our farms and has given valuable guidance on so many aspects of plants and life. He has been an epitome of simplicity and humbleness. It is rare to find a person so accomplished who is also so down to earth.

One major achievement of this magnificent journey was the epic book *Roses in the Fire of Spring*. The book does justice to their journey and has been very well written. Just last year we had the pleasure and privilege of having the Rose Couple read out excerpts from the book. The audience was awestruck and fascinated, eagerly listening to catch their words of wisdom.

Viru will be dearly missed by the entire rose world. A void that will be never filled. We pray to the almighty to give Girja the strength to carry on the good work. We will always be there for her.

Nature ally Yours

Our Reminiscence of Viru

Rebecca Hook

Former owner of Le Roseraie du Desert
Gers, France

We met Gurja and Viru for the first time at Chaalis, near Paris at a conference of the World Federation of Roses in 2007 though my husband John had been in correspondence with Viru about old roses, particularly 'M Falcot' We brought them back to our house in the Gers, southern France to stay with us for a few days It was wonderful to have them stay and begin to get to know them.

It was easy to talk to Viru, he was interested in everything and had so much to share Aside from being extremely knowledgeable, Viru was a true gentleman, and he did not allow his expertise to interfere with his interactions with people Always happy to share his knowledge AND listen to what others had to say He was quiet and observant, funny and kind and a delightful person to have as a friend I can see him walking with his hands behind his back, a little behind the rest of the group, taking in information, allowing himself to be absorbed by his surroundings A little smile or a twinkle in his eye might meet you if you looked his way



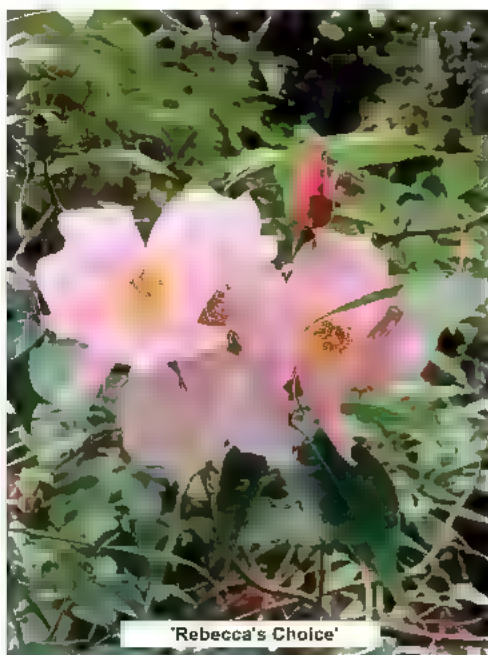
With Rebecca and John Hook in our Kodaikanal garden, 2012

His dedication and tenacity with his breeding program was so impressive, the results of his years of observation, knowledge and planning are here for us to see and enjoy in all the roses he brought to fruition. He quietly persevered with what he knew to be good foundations for the creation of beautiful and sound rose varieties.

John remembers him telling us that in India, more whisky is consumed than is produced in Scotland!

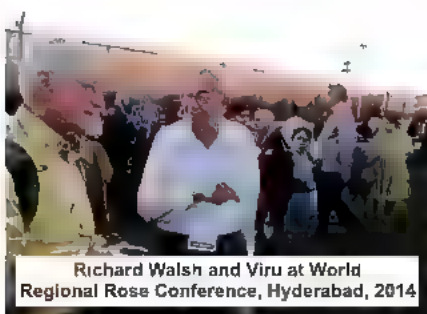
When we visited them in India in 2012 they took us to the farm of their friend near Madurai who has the most incredible collection of plumeria and cochlospermum, which John had never heard of before, and was so impressed by the collection and very grateful that they thought of sharing it with us.

We met them many times in the years after, driving with them to the Riviera to see gardens, and going to Sintra, Portugal, to see the gardens there and especially to see the two ancient stone tablets brought from India many centuries ago, and which mention about roses being grown by the temple gardeners guild (Editors Note: the tablets were from the Somanatha Temple (now under the sea) in Gujarat State.)



Recollections of Viru

Richard Walsh
Rose Breeder
Australia



I first met Viru and Girja at a Heritage Roses Conference in Australia in 2001 (at Hahndorf). I recall his lecture was about breeding roses from *R. gigantea*, particularly for warm climates. Alister Clark in Australia had also done the same thing earlier, looking for roses more suited to the Australian climate than were the many European and

particularly English ones being imported at the time. Australia's climate is hotter and drier than the conditions in Europe, similar in many ways to parts of India. Girja conducted a workshop on products made from or with roses. Both presentations were extremely well received and still remembered. What was best remembered however was the quiet authority and gracious nature of the two presenters. Future contacts only confirmed those first impressions.

I always felt that Clark's roses were not finished, that there was still some way to go to bring them to the point where they were suitable for the average home garden. Most were still gigantic like *R. gigantea* and many were still only once flowering (spring), so it was good that someone else was going to complete the work and develop roses for warmer, drier climates that were suitable for the home gardener.

Viru also included other species in the quest for better roses, including *R. chinophylla*, again with a special goal in mind, to create evergreen plants that retained their foliage throughout the growing season. He was generous in sharing his findings and plant material with others. I was always disappointed that his roses were not commercially available in Australia.

What was also obvious was that this quietly spoken, unassuming man was one half of a team and it was inspirational to see Viru and Girja work together presenting their findings to the eager audiences around the world over many years.

Evergreen Dreams

Robert Neil Rippetoe
Rose breeder
California USA

What motivates a person to spend a lifetime breeding roses?

It was said, "A rose is a rose, is a rose", but we rose lovers know that absolutely isn't true, is it?

Anyone that knows roses can tell you there are myriad differences from one to another, not even beginning to explain how many individual species commonly make up the genome

In my time on this planet, I've been fortunate to make the acquaintance of some wonderfully inspired individuals

Why do they do it? I could argue that it's about love and leaving a legacy of that love to humanity Nearly twenty years ago, one such meeting changed the course of my intentions for breeding better roses It was at the 'Great Rosarians of the



With Robert Rippetoe and Cass Bernstein, California, 2006

World' at the Huntington Library and Gardens lecture in San Marino, CA, that I first learned of the work of Viru and Girja Viraraghavan.

I think Viru bred roses out of the love for humanity and for the love of his native country. Some of us choose to try to make life better by leaving a living legacy, that being the product of our efforts.

Mainstream roses are in general not difficult to breed using current and proven genetics, Viru produced a number, but they can be challenging to cultivate depending on one's climate and dependent on the roses one chooses to grow.

Growing roses and creating roses best suited to one's climate by incorporating new and untried species is one way to meet the challenge without resorting to environmentally harmful methods of cultivation.

One of the ways rose hybridizers might work to make those challenges easier is to incorporate the genetics of roses endemic to those climates created by nature. That's not to say that even once the initial hybrids are created, they then will possess the qualities we seek, or provide the fertility needed to provide improvement. This can involve many years of trial and error just to create the first initial F1 species hybrids.

India is blessed with many native species but practically none of them were explored or exploited before the work of the Viraraghavans. I say the Viraraghavans because there is no doubt Viru and Girja are a team, and their diligence together is what gave them the persistence to create innovation. Nature provides the way forward in the form of species roses selected since the beginning of life on our planet.

I believe Viru's love of India provided the basis for first seeking out and documenting some of India's most important native roses, but then working to incorporate the new and novel genetic possibilities afforded by use of these species.

One could argue India is largely a warm and tropical country. Our world is heading into an era when adaptation to heat may be imperative. Why not use the tools Mother Nature created by natural selection created throughout millennia and similar points in history to help meet those challenges?

Though roses in general are not thought of in terms of being evergreen, those native to the tropical regions of some Asian countries often retain their leaves through much of the year. Viru was most interested in this feature, especially as they can be bred to blossom in winter months.

Choosing which genetics to move forward requires decades of experience and a working knowledge of which roses available to breeders might make good

candidates for experimentation to use with native species. The hands-on experience gained through cultivation and experimentation is essential to these efforts.

Rose breeders are said to stand on the shoulders of those rose breeders who have come before. The records of their efforts can give insights as to which roses to use as potential parents. They can provide insight. This said, Viru did much in the way of finding his own way forward by incorporating lesser known and often more challenging choices. Old garden roses featured repeatedly in his work including 'Mrs. B. R. Cant', and 'Reve d'Or'.

When questioned about the rose species Viru collected and used in his work, Giritja replied: "We had friends send us *Rosa chinophylla*. We personally gathered *Rosa gigantea*, *Rosa longicuspis*, *Rosa lyelli* (a form of *Rosa chinophylla*) and *Rosa leschenaultiana*.

Viru used in his breeding: *Rosa bracteata*, *Rosa longicuspis*, *Rosa laevigata*, *Rosa hirtula*, *Rosa chinensis spontanea*, *Rosa laevigata rosea*, *Rosa ecae*, *Rosa praelucens*, *Rosa roxburghii plena*, *Rosa tunquinensis*, *Rosa stellata mirifica* through its hybrids. I think I have covered all but I may have missed out some."

One thing that has stayed with me, meeting Viru, growing his roses and learning about his work, is the fact Viru was focused on using species endemic to India, and in particular, the Indian form of *Rosa gigantea*. In his writings he documented how and where it was discovered growing in its native habitat. This form of *gigantea* is unique to India and offers novel genetics inherent in the species.

Most roses in commerce today, till now, derive from the Chinese form of *Rosa gigantea* used to produce some of the earliest cultivated Teas derived from those acquired by the British during the voyages of discovery. I believe that Viru intended that in his work he would instil novelty and a little bit of the very history and fabric of India, by using those species native to his homeland.

We have much to learn and yet much to explore in terms of creating new roses. Viru has left us a new beautiful, and wonderful, palette of possibilities to explore going forward. One of the most wonderful things about roses is that they are technically immortal and constantly renewed through their propagation and then through their progeny. May they live and grow in his memory.

Thank you, Viru, and thank you, Giritja, for making these lasting gifts.

Roses and Friendship: Viru and Girija Viraraghavan

Rosario Algorta de Carrau
WFRS Past Vice President for South America 2012-2022
Montevideo, Uruguay



For me, ROSES are more than the plant in itself. It is about the wonderful persons from all over the world that you get to know because of them!

How can I talk about the famous VIRU, without mentioning his loving wife, Girija?

I first got to know about them in the year 2000, when my cousin Mercedes Drever Algorta de Villar, who was then WFRS Vice President for South America, mentioned in our monthly Committee of the Uruguayan Rose Society, that she had met a couple from India, whom she would like to invite to give a lecture in Uruguay. It sounded something exotic, receiving people from the other part of the world, so, we started planning what to do, besides the Lecture in a big Convention Centre, where we would invite, not only the members of the Rose Society, but also from the Garden Clubs of Uruguay, with members from all over our small country.

Then, we had to think on how to entertain them while they were in our country. I suggested going to a farm, as cattle and crops are the main productions of Uruguay. But it also had to be something exotic for our visitors. We went with some members of our Rose Committee to the farm of Princess Lætitia d' Arenberg, named 'LAS ROSAS' (The ROSES). What a coincidence! It is named not because she has beautiful roses, but because the former owners were our (Mercedes and mine) relatives. Rosa Algorta, her mother and daughter also called ROSA, so in plural: The Roses!

There I first met Viru and Girja and there was immediate rapport between us three!!!

The farm that had belonged to my close family, now was owned by a foreign Princess, of the royal Habsburg lineage, who is an Uruguayan entrepreneur of French origin, born in Libano, who has been living here for a long time Princess Laetitia d' Arenberg received our delegation with so much charm, she showed us her rose collection, imported from Europe and also her cows and Arab horses, which always win the Great Champion awards in the annual Cattle Show as well as her roses, which are so unbeatable, whenever she presents them !

Then, Laetitia invited us to a nearby farm for lunch San Pedro de Timote, which had also belonged to a relative of Mercedes and myself since 1854 and nowadays is a famous tourist farm That day trip was the first time I had time enough to talk to Viru and Girja, we had so much in common, though belonging to countries so far away ..

The next day was the lecture and it was a complete success! We learnt so much from a topic that sounded so different from all we had heard before every time I hear about *Rosa gigantea*, I associate it with Viru! When they finished, the audience stood up and started clapping with so much enthusiasm!!!

Then, we started meeting with the Viraraghavans in every Rose Convention around the world, big hugs every time we met, and it was a pleasure for me to go for the first time to India in 2014, to the Regional in Hyderabad

There, at the fantastic Rose Show, I first saw the famous roses hybridized by Viru, such beautiful colours and perfect shapes I wondered how much time he had spent selecting their parents, so much effort and patience to choose the right ones And there were so many more to admire, when they gave me the catalogue with all the available varieties!

While I was there, it was their turn to show me their country and I immediately fell in love with it, since then I went twice and hope to return in 2028 for the World Rose Convention in Bhopal

Another special moment with Viru, was during the Regional Chinese Rose Convention in Beijing in May 2016 I received an invitation to be part of the Panel of Discussion about Modern Roses Only one representative from each of the five Continents Viru for Asia and me for North and South America. I must confess, it was for me a great responsibility and I said to Girja that I was a little bit nervous She immediately said to me: 'Sit beside Viru and he may hold your hand to encourage you in front of the enormous audience' It was a true

demonstration of our friendship and once I was there, feeling that Viru was beside me, I could answer naturally all the questions!

The last time I met Viru was in the Heritage Convention in Belgium 2023 He looked as usual and we spent much time together with him and Girija. We admired together the Crépin Collection (see photograph)

And I never thought I would not meet him again ever more

Now, I think of Girija, that as I myself am a widow and I know roses are the best healing when you suffer a great loss...

That is the Spirit of the Rose : ROSES & FRIENDSHIP I WILL ALWAYS REMEMBER YOU SMILING, DEAR VIRU!!!



The Crépin Collection in Meise, Belgium

The Indian Dream

Rudolf Bergmann

Rose aficionado and grower

Lauterbach, Germany

In 1991, I saw the first historic roses in England and a passion began. My garden soon became too small, as the ancient roses that were still on sale were joined by numerous 'found roses' from the neighbourhood and all over Europe.

After a few years, I came across a rose grower in India on the internet: Viru Viraraghavan. The first pictures of some of his roses made me curious and I got in touch with Gurja, his wife, who lovingly presented his varieties on Facebook and the well-known rose portal HMF (HelpMeFind.com roses).

Viru was a very special breeder. I soon realised that. He didn't breed for the international rose industry, where only profit counts and which is marketing the same rose with X different names because it's good for business. I had to realise again and again: this rose already existed almost identically a few decades ago, the new one is supposed to be very healthy, but has no longer any fragrance.

Viru bred with love for the queen of flowers, he understood this plant! He didn't follow the mainstream and created one tea hybrid after another - no, he followed the needs of the rose, and these are very different in the various climate zones of India and completely different from those in Europe or North America.

To do this, he went back to the origins of the rose on the Indian subcontinent and the surrounding countries. On numerous trips there, together with Gurja, he collected the native botanical rose species and their varieties (hybrids) in order to breed with them. This was the only way he could create roses that were perfectly suited for the different climatic zones of his homeland and corresponding zones around the world.

Rose classes were created that were completely new to me, but also to the entire rose world. It was only through Viru that other amateur growers were encouraged to try out individual crosses with *Rosa gigantea*, *Rosa banksiae* and *Rosa chinophylla* - to name but a few. Through Viru's contacts with botanists and explorers he obtained, for example, a variety of *Rosa chinophylla* that grew in the Padma River and the Ganges - a world sensation! No botanist had ever reported such a rose before. *1

In Kodaikanal in the mountains of South India, numerous beautiful and mostly completely new roses were created. Once they had proven themselves for a few years, Girja and Viru thought about a name. It was often an idiomatic name, but roses were also dedicated to friends all over the world, whom the two had met through their work, but also when travelling to rose friends worldwide. As well as at international rose congresses, where they were invited to give talks about their work. Some roses found their way to Italy and the USA to small rose nurseries or public collections – so a second, non-Indian name could be considered.

I was so enthusiastic about Viru's cultivars that I soon began to describe them all in my rose portal 'Rose Biblio'. This in turn pleased Gurja and Viru and I received copies of all the articles that Viru and Gurja had written about his work. This was of course particularly interesting reading, which would certainly interest other rose lovers around the world, and so I compiled all the writings into a kind of book and published it on Archive org, so that today anyone can read all these works online. **2

Unfortunately, one wish remained unfulfilled. To meet Viru and his wife in person and visit them in their rose paradise in Kodaikanal! But I was often there in my thoughts.

* **M. S. Viraraghavan, Indian Rose Annual, 1998** : Is *R. climophylla* the Lotus of the Rose World? https://archive.org/details/ira_1998/is_r_climophylla_the_lotus_of_the_rose_world/3/mode/2up

**** Collection of all Articles of Girija and Viru Viraraghavan**

<https://archive.org/details/all-articles-of-girja-and-viru-viraraghavan>

Willkommen • Welcome • Bienvenue !

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Viru Sir: The Rosarian par Excellence

Sanjoy Mukherjee
Rose breeder, Joint Secretary, Bengal Rose Society
Kolkata West Bengal



Viru Sir with other rosarians after
My talk at Pune, 2022

I recall with great pleasure the day, during the 2007 Indian Rose Convention at Bhopal, when I first met with Viru Sir, that most eminent man of roses. From that day, I have had a feeling of deep affection and reverence for him and his contributions. His guidance and mentorship since that day makes me truly feel blessed. It's

really a pleasure (though a tough job) to write something about this eminent rosarian.

Mr M S Viraraghavan (Viru Sir or Viru Uncle, to most of us) is, was a renowned Indian horticulturist and a celebrated rose breeder, with his 'ground breaking' work in developing new rose varieties suitable for tropical climates, using various rose species. Born with a passion for botany, Mr Viraraghavan spent decades cultivating exquisite roses that thrive in various climates, not just our tropical one. His remarkable work has led to the development of more than 100 registered rose varieties, including the esteemed 'M S Swaminathan Rose' named in honour of Prof M S Swaminathan, the father of India's Green Revolution. Indeed, a legend naming a rose for another legend.

Viru Sir had been a founding member of the Indian Rose Federation and the Editor of the *Indian Rose Annual* for over 30 years. He, alongside his partner, Girja Viraraghavan, has been the driving force for the *Indian Rose Annual* who by their exemplary work, brought to it a high standard of excellence.

Viru Sir's creations have received international acclaim. He was awarded the 'Great Rosarian of the World' award by the Huntington Library and Garden, another award by the World Federation of Rose Societies (WFRS) in 2006 at Osaka, and many awards and medals in India, culminating with the Lifetime

Achievement Award in Rose Breeding by the Indian Rose Federation at the World Regional Convention Kolkata in 2020. His work has featured in several national and international publications and has been beautifully chronicled by him in his book *Roses in the Fire of Spring* which aptly captures his epic journey as a rose hybridizer.

Mr Viraraghavan's tireless efforts have significantly contributed to the world of horticulture, particularly rose breeding, inspiring future generations of rose enthusiasts and breeders. His dedication to creating climate resilient roses has made a lasting impact on the rose industry.

I am also, as a breeder, working with similar blood lines, including their new generations, which do well in my Kolkata climate. But some of his blood lines, e.g. the *Rosa clinophylla* Hybrid Tea like 'Ganges Mist' (Alliance x [Arthur Bell x [Little Darling x [*Rosa clinophylla* x *Rosa bracteata*]]) white, near white or white blend shrub doesn't perform well here. It may be due to the fact that *Rosa clinophylla*, native to the lower Himalayas, South Asia, and Southeast Asia, loves moist climate and does not feel comfortable in the warm day temperatures of Kolkata (30-40 degree Celsius). But three other varieties, which I like are:

1. 'Kanchi' ('Gruss an Teplitz' x unknown)
 2. 'Vanamali' ('Lady' x ('Gruss an Teplitz' x unknown) x 'Lake Como') x 'Angel Face'
 3. 'Maura la Cava' ('Faith Whittlesey' x 'Souvenir de la Mme Leonie Viennot')
- All are good climate change resistant roses.

Among the Viru Viraraghavan *gigantea* hybrids, 'Faith Whittlesey' ('Rêve d'Or' x 'Echo' x *R. gigantea* x 'Marie Van Houtte') is a magnificent rose in every aspect. If I hadn't known better I would say it is a bush form of 'New Dawn' but much more floriferous. But no, 'Faith Whittlesey' definitely has a *R. gigantea* grandmother. The striking resemblance to 'New Dawn' is not that strange. 'Dr W. Van Fleet', the rambler parent of 'New Dawn', has 'Safrano' in its parentage and 'Rêve d'Or' is regarded as a double climbing 'Safrano', and apparently 'Faith Whittlesey' has all those genes.

'Churachand' ('Veteran's Honor' x 'Naga Belle') is also a good seed parent.

'Rêve d'Or' was one of Viru Sir's favourite roses and it is a good seed parent. No wonder so many of his roses have 'Rêve d'Or' parentage. 'Faith Whittlesey', in my observation, makes a domed, rounded, neat shrub of approx. 75 X 75 cm or 2.5 X 2.5 feet. It is an ideal rose for bedding or in front of the border – exquisite in combination with purple or blue perennials. Flowers are mostly borne solitary or in small clusters. Average diameter of the flowers is 3-5 inch or almost ten cm.

They are double and are white to cream with a light pink shading in the centre. No fragrance. The bush blooms in flushes throughout the year. 'Faith Whittlesey' is remarkably hardy, drought and heat resistant. It is one of my favourite Viru Sir's roses, and a bright future awaits 'Faith Whittlesey'.....

I am working with some of his varieties with very good results in Bengal. They have now completed 3 years trial in this climate and are thriving well. The most important varieties of my breeding work using the blood from Viru Uncle's creations.

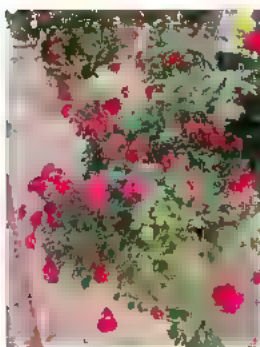
- a. **'Manjusree'**: ('Faith Whittlesey' x 'Paper Flower') Floribunda, outstanding potted rose with pink double petals (17-25), borne mostly solitary floribunda bloom form. Blooms in flushes throughout the season. The special feature of this plant is you don't have to worry about any pesticides or insecticides sprays for it. It is long lasting and free flowering healthy plant.
- b. **'Ayushi'**: ('Faith Whittlesey' x 'Manjusree') Floribunda, Pink double petals (17-25), borne mostly solitary, floribunda bloom form. Blooms in flushes throughout the season.
- c. **'Master Shivay'**: ('Manjusree' x 'Sadabahar'). Floribunda, Pink, medium, semi double (9-16 petals) blooms in flushes throughout the season. Pointed buds. Superb huge clusters.
- d. **'Pink Bouquet'**: ('Faith Whittlesey' x 'Manjusree') Pink double petals (17-25), borne mostly solitary floribunda bloom form. Excellent disease resistance.
- e. **'Sweet Candy'**: ('Manjusree' x 'Park Place') light, baby pink. Borne mostly solitary floribunda bloom form, Excellent disease resistance.
- f. **'Shubhangam'**: ('Churachand' x 'Coral Spire'), HT, This slow opener in apricot shade, light pink blend, petal edges and tips deep red, with rolled petals, has a distinct centre. The flowers are large (3.5-4.5 dia. 50 petals) with immaculate shape and form. This large, fragrant, exquisite beauty has very long lasting flowers on strong stiff stalks.

The hybrids with *Rosa gigantea* made by him are, in my opinion, the future of the rose. I think we should breed more using them for developing vigorous, 'disease resistant' ones. I truly believe (based on my personal breeding experience) that a complete 'disease resistant' variety will soon be available in India from the genes available in this species. This is what the rose world needs in the future.

Viru Sir always told us, if, in a meeting of a rose society, we don't talk for at least half an hour about roses, the basic purpose of a rose society is lost. Usually though, he would say, the meeting would be about politics and administrative

work' I recall with gratitude, this great man listened to my seminar for more than an hour at Pune All India Rose Convention (2022) and then came to the stage using the support of a walking stick, to congratulate me. This to this day remains the best memory of my rose journey and a true achievement in my life.

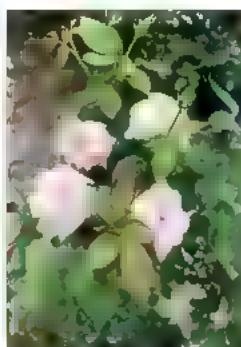
The rose fraternity of India have lost their crown, but his legacy will always be with the world with his creations which he bred with so much heart. Our prayers for his soul to rest in peace. His legacy will live on and keep guiding us on the fine art and science of rose breeding.



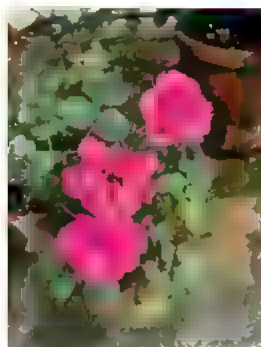
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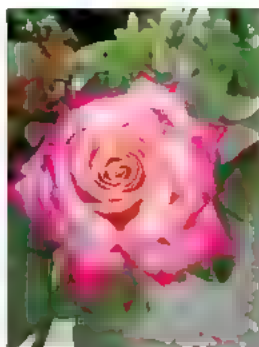
Manjusree



Pink Bouquet



Shubhangam



Sweet Candy

M. S. Viraraghavan: A Jewel of the Rose World

Mrs. Sanyogita Dhanawatey
President, Indian Rose Federation
Nagpur, Maharashtra

Mr M S Viraraghavan (Virus) was a thorough gentleman, polite and always smiling, a well known breeder of roses in India and abroad. His research on roses in India left the best scientists bewildered and amazed at the scientific background of his breeding work. I had the opportunity of meeting him at all the IRF Conventions since inception in 1978. At the technical sessions at these conferences his papers were discussed and people enthusiastically listened with rapt attention to all that he shared about his on-going breeding work. He had great qualities as a breeder and his passion for roses was ceaseless. The last time I met him was at Pune in September 2023, where his book 'Roses in the Fire of Spring' was released. Smiling as usual, he spoke about the book and about his journey in roses and other plants.

His passing away has left a void, which will never be filled. May his soul rest in eternal peace and God give strength to Girija and the family.



Book release, Pune, September 2023 Sanyogita Dhanawatey President IRF in Centre

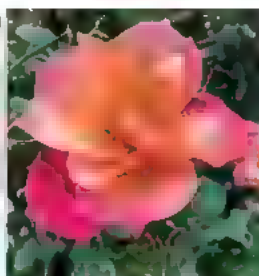
Viru Viraraghavan

Sheenagh Harris
Past President WFRS
South Africa

Humble, gentle and quietly spoken is how I think of Viru. Nobody would guess he was one of the most knowledgeable rosarians we had the pleasure and honour to meet and enjoy in the rose world. I first met Viru and Girija in Somerset West, South Africa in 2002 and little did I realise how important they were and how much they were in demand throughout the rose world and therefore we would meet over and over again in the years ahead. I soon realised they were held in high esteem and yet we were able to get to know and admire them, the more we saw them. It is hard to write about Viru without including Girija as they were an inseparable couple with such a high regard and respect for one another. Imagine my surprise when this highly regarded and well known breeder of roses named a rose for me – what an honour and what pleasure it has given me a permanent reminder of a very special person and his equally special wife.



Viru with Sheenagh Harris and David Ruston,
Sakura convention 2012



'Sheenagh Harris'

Li Hui's Kind Grandpa

Dr Zhao Shiwei
Vice President, WFRS
Secretary General, Chinese Rose Society
Beijing China

The 14th World Rose Convention was held in Osaka from May 12-17, 2006. More than 700 rosarians from around the world gathered in Osaka. I was invited to be the speaker at the convention. This was the first time that I attended a world rose convention and talked about roses in front of 700 rosarians in the audience. I was not quite sure if my talk interested the rose friends. In the afternoon of May 16, it was my turn to speak. I went to the stage and talked about the progress and the current situation of rose production, breeding and uses in China. Before I concluded my talk, I even answered two questions. A nice lady in Indian costume commented that my talk was quite interesting before she asked me a question. After I finished the talk, a number of people came to me to congratulate me. Just in the back of the lecture hall, the lady in Indian costume together with a gentleman wearing spectacles came up to me. They said that they liked my talk very much and extended congratulations to me again. They shook my hands and Girja even gave me a hug. I can feel the warmth from their hands and the hug. From that time I came to know that it's Viru and Girja, the famous marvellous



With Zhao Shiwei 2012 in Sakura

rose couple from India. I didn't know many Indian friends very well before and I was impressed that Girija was vigorous and friendly and Viru was very kind and gentle. They gave me some magazines as gifts. That's the first time I met Viru and Girija. I can still feel how kind they were.

Rose conventions are always pleasant as you can meet old friends and get to know new friends with a common interest in roses. After the Osaka convention, I tried to attend all the world conventions and as many as possible of the regional conventions and heritage rose conferences-Vancouver, Johannesburg, Lyon, Copenhagen and Adelaide, I didn't miss any world convention. I also went to Sakura Japan, Sangerhausen Germany, Barcelona, Spain, Ponte d'Este Uruguay, Kolkata India and Kalma, Sweden. Each time I met Viru and Girija, they would give me a hug and shake my hands. I can feel the warmth of their hug. I cherish this friendship and kindness.

In 2012, I met Viru and Girija again in Sakura Japan when the International Heritage Rose Conference was held. Girija gave me a hug and Viru shook hands with me. It was a warm hug. In the rose garden, we saw some roses from India. We were told that these roses were bred by M S. Viraraghavan and Girija. This time in our group there were five members including Zhao Peng from Beijing Botanical Garden and Li Hui from Daxing. Soon after we met Viru and Girija, Li Hui and Zhao Peng said they liked the kind couple very much. Li Hui said Viru is so kind and he reminded her of her grandpa. Girija said yes, he is like a grandpa. After that, whenever we met Viru, Li Hui would tell me that is our Indian Grandpa.

As we were preparing for the WFRS Regional Convention to be held in 2016 in Daxing Beijing, we decided to invite Viru and Girija to give a talk. They accepted the invitation and we met again in Beijing. Viru and Girija introduced their work of rose breeding in their talk. They used their local rose species to breed many interesting beautiful roses. From the talk, I could feel their passion for roses. Growing roses had been an important part of their life. Li Hui and Zhao Peng were happy to see their Indian Grandpa in Beijing.

In 2019, the WFRS Regional Convention was held in Nanyang. Viru and Girija were invited to be the speakers. I was very happy to meet them again. Girija gave me a hug and Viru shook hands with me. Viru and Girija talked about their roses in the talk. Their roses were so interesting that some of my Chinese rose friends wanted to grow some of them in China. Professor Zhao Hui asked Viru and Girija for some plants. A few months later, Professor Zhao was excited to receive the plants from Viru and Girija. Hopefully, these varieties will grow well in China.

In January 2020 just before the Covid-19 pandemic, I arrived in Kolkata India to

attend the regional convention. It was my first time to land in India. I was very excited to visit India, a country of mystery, and to meet my friends Viru and Girija in their home country. Just on the last day of the convention, we went to the Kolkata Botanic Garden. We attended the opening ceremony of the new rose garden in the Botanic Garden, where a rose bred by Viru, 'E K. Janaki Ammal' was going to be planted by the President of WFRS, Baroness Henriette de Briey. After the Director of the Botanic Garden introduced the rose garden project, Viru was invited to go to the stage to give a talk. There are a few steps upward to the microphone. As he stood from his seat, he stumbled a little bit. Since I was at the first row, I stood to take his arm and accompanied him to get to the stage. He expressed gratitude to me. At that time, I didn't realize that it would be the last time I met Viru.

Last week when I was having tea in my home I saw a nice hand embroidery cloth. Girija and Viru gave me this as a gift when they visited Daxing many years ago. It reminded me of the time when we met them. I take this opportunity to send my best regards to Girija. And wish peace be with Viru in Heaven.

My Father's Great Friend

Sriram Kasturirangan
KSG SON Rose Nursery
Bengaluru Karnataka



Words cannot describe the depth of the bond between my father, G.Kasturirangan, and Mr. Viraraghavan (as well as his wife Gurja) as he was one of the finest rosarians in the country. Wherever they went, both Mr and Mrs Viraraghavan were well received and respected. My father and Mr Viraraghavan connected

over the mutual love for roses native to India as well as global strains Truly, it is difficult to encompass the many years of a beautiful relationship shared between these two stalwarts, as the bond ran deeper than words can measure

Mr Viraraghavan was a man of many interests and a deeply creative, intellectual human being who openly shared his ideas about the ingenuity in the rose world as well as its many hybridisations. His contribution towards heritage as well as modern roses as an Indian is quite remarkable and known internationally as well. He had a proclivity for them and knew their availability at a moment's notice. His eye for detail was unmatched and often flowed into the events that he lectured at and attended around the world. One would find him at all the world rose conventions and heritage rose conferences globally. His lectures during these conferences and events were deeply inspirational and noted well amongst experts in the community. The depth of his knowledge and his voracious curiosity always gave the rosarian community much to think about and admire.

I remember in the early 80s Mr Viraraghavan had bought a couple of roses from me, namely 'Crimean Night' and 'Youth of the World' which were the first rose plants he ever purchased from KSG Son. Most of his personal hybrids were given to us, and are still performing exceptionally leaving a remarkable and colourful legacy behind.

He was instrumental in the Centenary Rose Garden in Ooty getting the Garden of Excellence Award from WFRS. He himself was awarded a WFRS Medal of Honour at the World Rose Convention held in Osaka, Japan in 2006, in which year too he received 'The Great Rosarian of the World Award' from Huntington Gardens, California.

During the planting of a new government rose garden in Kodaikanal in 2016, I happened to visit his home which was a beautiful, large Portuguese bungalow. His garden was bejewelled with his roses and other types of flowering plants which were quite a marvel to witness. The care and attention to the plants was so visible to the eye, which made me admire the man for his tenacious care. While mature plants decorated the garden, he also had little rose seedlings growing as well. This particular collection of roses also included an expanse of other wonderful plants that were hybridized or collected over the years. Some of the magnolias and fuchsias in his collection were also eye catching and certainly made one wonder about the depth of his knowledge and his eye for botanicals. Speaking to the diversity of his collection and talents, he hybridized rhododendrons, which was unheard of at the time in India and quite unique.

He is known as the backbone of the Indian Rose Federation as his contributions to the rosarian world are unparalleled. His passion for botanicals both within India and globally were quite something to witness as he moved worlds to achieve a singular vision. His many gifts also included writing, as he was a prolific researcher and writer for the Indian Rose Annual. His articles often informed and amazed the community, keeping them engaged with ease.

Some of his outstanding creations like 'Achanta', 'Ahimsa', 'Ajatashatru Kasturi', 'Blushing Yuki', 'Coffee Country', 'E K Janaki Ammal', 'Somasila', 'Naga Belle', 'Pat Shanley', 'Priyatama', 'Rose Sullivan' etc. are currently growing in many of the official rose gardens in India and abroad. These and others of his varieties are also grown by many amateur rose growers across the world.

On behalf of the KSG Family we deeply revere and express our gratitude for Mr Viraraghavan's invaluable presence in our lives.



Viru and Kasturi shared a special close bond



'Ajatashatru Kasturi'

Singularly Beautiful Viru

Stephen Hoy

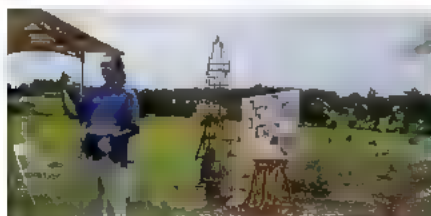
Editor, 'Singularly Beautiful Roses' journal

Georgia USA

As a long time customer of Roses Unlimited, South Carolina USA, I've been aware of the rose hybrids created by Viru for years. In 2018 I reached out to Viru and Girija via HelpMeFind/roses.com requesting permission to use one of their photos in an article I was writing. They graciously gave me permission and I forwarded a copy of the newsletter to them. It was the beginning of more awareness on my part of the warm weather rose hybridizing Viru was engaged in. I continued to forward newsletters and frequently received complimentary replies.

Ironically, I had begun writing about *Rosa gigantea* when I noticed a post containing a link to a programme Viru and Girija had presented at a World Federation of Rose Societies conference in Belgium about their work with that species. On a whim I reached out to them about turning their PowerPoint programme into an article. Once again I received gracious permission and I set to work. In June of 2023 I sent a preview copy which received their approval.

All my interactions with Viru and Girija have been marked by kindness and a willingness to interact in a very amiable fashion. They never hinted at their vastly greater knowledge and experience. To my surprise and delight, and in an act of over the top generosity, they offered to name one of their seedlings for me shortly before Viru passed. I was thrilled to be included in honouring Viru at the dedication of a garden of his roses in May 2024 in Alachua, Florida, and to meet family members. The accomplishments of Viru and Girija extend beyond horticulture and beyond their homeland and have touched hearts worldwide.



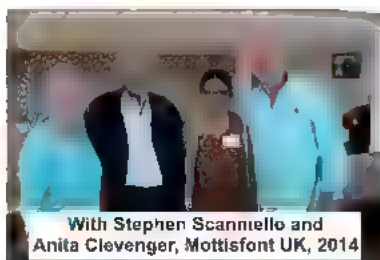
Stephen Hoy speaking of Viru roses at
Memorial Rose Garden, Alachua FL, May 2024



'Stephen's Dream'

Remembering Viru Viraraghavan

Stephen Scanniello and Dane Twining
President Heritage Rose Foundation, Author,
Curator Peggy Rockefeller Rose Garden,
New York Botanic Garden
Dane Twining, Partner to Stephen Scanniello
USA



Over a lifetime in the rose world, we have had the privilege of breaking bread with some of the world's most eminent rosarians, rose historians, conservationists and hybridizers of our generation. And with more than a few we have formed enduring friendships.

Most unforgettable among these are Viru Viraraghavan and his lifelong companion and collaborator Girja Viraraghavan, who like rose legends Peter Beales, Mike & Jean Shoup, Tom Carruth, Pat Toolan and Betty Vickers came to stay with us on occasion in Barnegat and Jersey City, New Jersey

So many wonderfully vivid memories! However, the memories were not always about roses. One in particular, dining with our mom, and Viru's spirited first encounter with Stephen's famous Italian Sunday gravy and a bowl of spaghetti noodles. Inescapable and infectious were his soft voice and humour, his delight as he would share the latest hybridizing successes, pictures of his favourite roses, as well as his colourful stories about travels with Girja and of course their beloved India.

As though it were yesterday, one sees us planting heritage roses together with Viru and Girja at New York's Trinity Cemetery & Mausoleum, the garth-or cloister-at the Church of the Intercession and other historical sites, in the effort to give root to a Heritage Rose District for the City of New York in Harlem.

Equally fascinating were presentations on the roses of India in connection with the G.R.O.W. East (Great Rosarians of the World) at Brooklyn Botanic Garden and our conversations at the awards dinner after Viru revealed in every encounter his passion for producing roses that were unmistakably his own in

their beauty and pedigree, on plants sufficiently vigorous to thrive under more environmentally safe and sustainable growing conditions.

Viru and I would enjoy hours discussing how the lore and allure of roses interweave the history of civilization, creating a continuous fabric linking present day gardeners with the ancient world, and the future. He would speak most persuasively of the importance of preservation when it comes to the genetics of ancient rose species, and hybrids long-ago gone out-of-fashion and commerce.

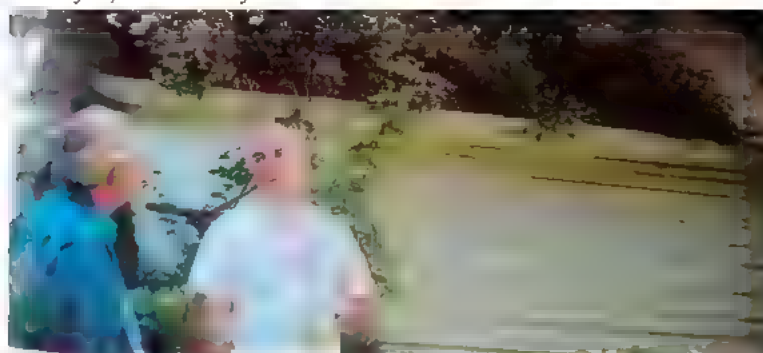
My partner Dane and I were relative novices by comparison, soaking up all the knowledge Viru was eager to share of a rich tapestry of rose species that have been cultivated for thousands of years in India, as well as the many spectacularly beautiful new hybrids grown and selected by Viru and his beloved Girija – inseparable friends, scientists and artists in equal measure.

Every time we see the beautiful textiles adorning our walls and the prints that Viru and Girija brought from Chennai, we recall the gentle mien and mild manner of a great soul who left us too soon. And well beyond our small corner of the world, Viru is going to be remembered for his scientific rigour, passion and his lifetime contribution to the horticultural life of India. It's not just we, his contemporaries, but future generations around the globe who will ever be in his debt.

We were saddened to hear of the passing of Viru Viraraghavan.

Viru was more than just a great rosarian. He was also a great author, gardener and friend. We shall continue to be reminded of his passion for new roses each spring as his many hybrids come into bloom. A current favorite of ours is the beautiful tea rose 'Faith Whittlesey', truly one of the best white shrub roses ever created.

Thank you, Viru and Girija for the beautiful memories.



With Stephen in his Barnegat garden

Viru

Steve Jones
Past President WFRS
Editor WFRS Newsletter
USA

I don't recall when I first met Viru and Girja, but for sure I did see them at the 2006 Great Rosarians of the World at the Huntington Library in San Marino, CA, where they were being honoured. I had known of Viru's work with roses and his enthusiasm beforehand. In fact, I remember driving them both back and forth from the hotel and getting to know them both even better without the crowds.

After that, Viru and Girja were mainstays at WFRS conventions, often as speakers. Usually, the topics were on his breeding program or growing roses in India.

Viru has been honoured by several gardens containing his roses, with United States and Sakura, Japan the first to come to mind. My personal favourites are 'Blushing Yuki', 'Twilight Tryst', and 'Naga Belle'.

If I had to select one word to describe Viru, that would be a gentleman. He was always happy, warm, concerning, and a true gentleman.

We will miss seeing him at conventions and in India.



With Steve Jones (back right), Michael Marriott (back left) Nanyang, China, 2019

Tribute to Viru

Subrata Ghosh
Rose Breeder
Durgapur West Bengal

I was shocked when I heard about the news of the sad demise of Mr Viraraghavan. It certainly created a void in the rose world

I met Mr Viraraghavan for the first time in Calcutta in the year 2005 at a rose show conducted by the Bengal Rose Society. It was in the premises of Agri Horticultural Society. After this, I met him a few times at rose shows and conferences in Kolkata and Jamshedpur.

People called him affectionately as 'Viru'. I shall also refer to him by this name. He was with his wife Girja. Girja was always with Viru in all his activities related to roses.

I asked Girja, whether Dr. Radhakrishnan, our former President was related to her. She told me Dr. Radhakrishnan was her grandfather on her mother's side.

Though we were of same age, Viru started rose breeding much earlier than me. I started breeding from 1980. I saw Viru's name in KSG's Rose Catalogue much before that.

He was a man of gentle personality, soft spoken and of course very knowledgeable about roses. His research on a species rose, *R. chinophylla*, grown in marshy lands was very commendable.

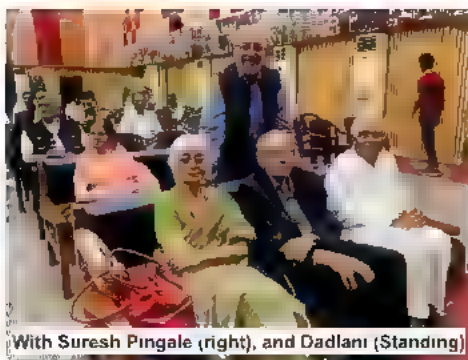
Plenty of excellent quality roses have come up from his breeding blood lines. These fine roses will make him immortal in rose history.

I also admire both of them for their extensive tours in different cities in India and foreign countries from time to time to attend rose shows, seminars and conferences.

My salutations to him

My Friend Viru

Suresh Pingale
Past President IRF
President Empress Rose Garden
Pingale's Rose Nursery
Pune Maharashtra



With Suresh Pingale (right), and Dadlani (Standing)

In the famous play 'My Fair Lady' Prof. Higgins tells his friend Col. Pickering "Phonetics is my profession, also my hobby. *Happy is the person who can make a living by his hobby.*" My lifelong journey into the rose world is somewhat similar to the advice of Prof. Higgins.

During my college days I took to the hobby of rose growing. And when I joined my father in his agricultural farm I started growing roses for market on a very large commercial scale-thus my hobby of rose growing became my profession! It certainly has given me a great deal of happiness. The monetary gains were a small part of that happiness but the major and lasting happiness came from friendships of many rosarians who became my intimate friends and extended family. Most distinguished among them were M S Viraraghavan, Viru for me, and his very charming and elegantly graceful wife Girija. Both Girija and Viru come from regal and celebrated lineages. Girija is a granddaughter of Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, second Rashtrapati of India and a great scholar of Philosophy in general and Indology in particular. Viru boasts of a renowned family of aristocratic members of 'The Steel Frame' of the civil services. His father was an ICS officer of the British Raj. He himself was a senior member of the IAS clan. He served the Andhra Pradesh Government in many departments. He took interest in rose growing, started breeding them and was a prominent member of the Hyderabad Rose Society. He was so much engrossed in the hobby of roses that in order to devote his time to his passion he resigned from the IAS in 1980.

In order to achieve this goal he and Girija shifted their residence to their farm at

Kodaikanal in Tamil Nadu. The couple devoted all their energy and time to the study and breeding of roses. During nearly half a century Viru has bred many new varieties roughly 118 suitable for warm climates. For this purpose he employed two Indian wild roses *Rosa chinophylla* and *Rosa gigantea*. His pioneering contribution was appreciated by the rosarians of many countries. During the World Regional Rose Convention in 1999, he was felicitated by the international rosarian community for his seminal work in the Indian rose world.

The result of these direct interactions with eminent international rose personalities meant that the Indian Rose Federation and its many activities were appreciated and recognised world-wide. The entire credit for this welcome development goes to Viraraghavan and Girija. The president of the World Federation of Rose Societies (WFRS) Ms. Helga Brichet invited Viraraghavan to be a speaker at the World Rose Convention to be held in May 2000 in Houston, USA. Through such activities the bond between the World Federation of Rose Societies and The Indian Rose Federation was established and strengthened. It further got impetus through the efforts of Ahmed Alam Khan (who was earlier Vice President Central Asia, WFRS) and recently by Sushil Prakash (presently Treasurer, WFRS). Viraraghavan has co-authored a book titled 'Roses in the Fire of Spring' along with his wife Girija. It is about rose hybrids created by them over last half century. The book is the history of the couple's journey for decades in search of Indian rose species. Through their breeding they have created hundreds of rose cultivars more suitable for Indian climatic conditions.

Viru's contribution to the world of rose hybridization was marked by a visionary approach to working with tropical rose species and a relentless pursuit of genetic innovation. His dedication to developing roses adaptable to changing climates has left an indelible mark on the field. The beauty and diversity of the roses he cultivated are a testament to his passion and skill. His legacy is not just in the roses that bloom in gardens across the world but in the lives he touched, the knowledge he imparted, and the beauty he added to the world. His journey was a blend of patience, resilience, and an unyielding dedication to his craft. It is a journey that saw him transform from a government official to a rose missionary, a journey where each rose he bred was a story, a memory, a piece of his soul.

I would like to conclude with the words of a friend. His life, much like the roses he bred, was a spectrum of experiences vibrant, challenging, and ultimately enriching. Viru's departure leaves behind a legacy as enduring and fragrant as the roses he loved. In gardens across the world, in the petals of every rose he nurtured, and in the hearts of those who knew him, Viru's memory will continue to bloom, a reminder of a life devoted to the pursuit of beauty, knowledge, and a higher consciousness.

'Viru' Viraraghavan and his legacy

Sushil Prakash,
Treasurer, WFRS
Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh



Viru Viraraghavan ... the name immediately conjures up an image of roses. A gentle person, a professor by demeanor, walking with a gait and a little hunched in his later years but the moment you come near him and start a dialogue, you see the twinkle in his eyes, which light up at the mention of

'rose' If you had had a chance to enjoy the evening with him he would regale fellow rosarians with his story telling abilities, bringing in a lot of laughter and banter in the group His one-liners with a true British sense of humour had people rolling in laughter and some of the more innocent European friends who took a little time in understanding the impact of his words would double up laughing much later These evenings were never complete without the presence of his beloved wife Girija and the two became the most loved and sought after rose couple of the world

Life as a child :

Born to Lakshmi and M S Sivaraman on 9th May, 1937, he got the horticulture genes from his mother and maternal grandfather, Sir T Vijayaraghavacharya, who was the vice chairman of the Imperial Council of Agricultural Research of the Government of India Viru's father, being a member of the Civil Services (ICS) was also the head of Agriculture Department of old Madras Presidency and launched a programme of organic farming in 1950's He brought some rose plants of Chinese origin like "Old Blush" from the Eastern Ghats and presented them to his son to grow them in the difficult climate of Madras Those who are familiar with Madras I am one of them) know that it has only three climates, HOT, HOTTER and HOTTEST This experiment was a total failure

On a short visit to Bangalore, named The Garden City, he saw roses blooming and doing well in the salubrious climate of this city. It was destiny, and the planets came together when he got bitten by the rose bug. One day led to another and he got to see Sim's Park in Coonoor and Botanical Garden in Ooty at an early age, due to his father's position. He was exposed not only to roses but to various flowering plants.

Youth

His interests in plants made him take up BSc (Honours) course as he wanted to be a major in Botany but for better career opportunities, he took up Chemistry on his father's advice. His father had already thought about his career in the India Administrative Service to follow in his footsteps. Viru got selected and spent a year at the IAS Academy in Mussourie in the Shivalik range of the Himalayas.

In March 1960, he married Gurya, his life-long partner. She came from a very different background but in a short time became his close companion on this tumultuous journey called 'Life'.

Adulthood

The rose bug in Viru lay dormant for a few years. It needed only a small push in the form of a home with space for a garden and a beautiful loving and understanding life partner to make it alive again. On his first posting as Assistant Collector he finally thought of a personal garden. He went collecting some roses, orchids and other plants for his garden but with a transferable job, he went about his responsibility with alacrity. He started settling into his interesting job and as District Collector of Nizamabad, he finally had ample space for gardening. He bought many roses of B S Bhattachaji's pioneer rose breeder). The list included 'Heart Throb', 'Kishori' and 'Raja Ram Mohun Roy'.

Rose hybridizer Viru

It was in Nizamabad that he decided to start rose breeding for warm climates. He used, 'Telangana Pink' (his code name for a heritage rose he found in this area) extensively. He went on to produce a floribunda in shades of coffee brown and lilac, which was named 'Coffee Country'. Then in the 1970's came 'Priyatama' meaning 'most beloved' for his wife, Gurya. Next came 'Vanamali', a lilac blue rose. Soon it was followed by a repeat flowering climber 'Kanyakumari', and shrubs 'Kanchi' and 'Kadambari'. After this there were no stops for Viru. He collected many wild roses *R. clinophylla*, *R. gigantea* and *R. longicuspis*, which later were the basis of Viru's roses. He went on to create several masterpieces like 'Faith Whittlesey', 'Naga Belle', 'Deccan Beauty', 'Ahimsa', 'Abhaya', 'Pat Henry', 'Ivory Chalice', 'Macbara's Dream' and many more. He went on to hybridize around 118 roses.

The beauty and diversity of the roses he cultivated are a testament to his passion and skill.

Honours and Affiliations

He was a founder member of Hyderabad Rose Society in 1977 and a founder member of Indian Rose Federation. He served as Vice President of Indian Rose Federation and received the Gold Medal for his pioneering work in hybridizing. He received the World Rose Award of the World Federation of Rose Societies. Both he and Girija were honoured with the 'Great Rosarians of the World Award' USA, in 2006.

Viru received the Lifetime Achievement Award for Rose Breeding in 2020 at the WFRS Regional Conference, Kolkata. He travelled across the globe making friends, delivering lectures and speaking about Indian roses and the history of this flower in this ancient country. He was a true ambassador of Indian Roses.

He published his book "*Roses in the Fire of Spring*" together with his wife Girija. The book is his life's journey and is a part travelogue and memoir, surely a collector's item.

What an incredible man and what a journey! No regrets! He lived a happy and fascinating life with his wife. He stood tall amongst the stars of the rose world. He will always be remembered. My close association with him is something I will always cherish.



With Sushil and Dipa Kumar, (2nd and 3rd from left) Brussels 2023

Missing You, Uncle Viru

Dr. Tejaswini P

Principal Scientist (Plant Breeding)

ICAR Indian Council of Horticultural Research

Bengaluru Karnataka

Viru Uncle meant more to me than just roses. The bond I shared with Viru Uncle and Girja Aunty was woven together through our mutual love for roses. It's impossible for me to think of roses without thinking of him, and equally impossible to think of Aunty without Uncle. The love and care they had for each other were as inspiring as their inclusiveness, welcoming the entire rose community into their lives.

I can't pinpoint exactly when I first met them—it feels like they've always been with me, whether we were in touch or not. Their presence was a constant source of strength, knowing I could reach out to them whenever I needed to.

I first heard of Mr. Viraraghavan, a retired IAS officer, when I was beginning my career in rose breeding. I was struggling with finding the right combinations and germinations, trying to create something farmers could cultivate. His name came up as someone who had been hybridizing rose species for many years. We finally met at one of the annual conventions of the Indian Rose Federation. Over



At M M Hills searching for *Rosa cinnophylla*. Dr. Tejaswini behind Viru

the years, we crossed paths at conventions in Pune, Hyderabad, and Calcutta. Each time, their enthusiasm was contagious, and their stories about roses inspired me to keep going, even during the toughest times in my breeding efforts.

Despite meeting them often, it was hard to find exclusive time with them; they were always surrounded by groups of rose enthusiasts. But my most cherished memory is from our trip to the Male Mahadeshwara (MM) Hills in 2007, in search of *Rosa clinophylla*. When Uncle and Auntie invited me to join their exploration trek, I eagerly accepted. Uncle's passion for creating tropical roses had taken them across India, and Auntie's unwavering support was evident in every step they took together.

Uncle already had *R. clinophylla* from Bengal, Bihar, and Mt. Abu in his collection, but his quest and Auntie's support wouldn't let him stop until he found all possible variants of *R. clinophylla*. They had turned the pages of history, examined piles of herbariums, and tracked up and down locations indicated in any of these sources: a true treasure hunt. They had read about its presence in "Poonachibetta," and after years of searching, they finally discovered "Ponnachibetta" in the MM Hills range, near Kollegal. Auntie, always the voice of Uncle's quests, extended the invitation to join them, and I, along with my friend Rekha, was eager to accompany them.

We stayed in a forestry guest house on top of the hills, where forest officers had once stayed during the hunt for the sandalwood smuggler Veerappan. The caretaker regaled us with chilling stories of Veerappan's traps and the merciless killings of forest officers. The next morning, our exploration began. We trekked through mountains, forests, and valleys carved by the Kaveri River, searching for the elusive *R. clinophylla* with its white, five-petaled flowers. Uncle was certain it would be near the banks of streams, so we trekked along them, accompanied by forest guards and villagers. Uncle's concern for everyone around him was as heartwarming as his kind spirit.

In the end, we didn't find what we came for, but I found something much more valuable: the love and stories of Uncle and Auntie, their global rose hunts, and the friendships they had cultivated along the way. We returned to our routines, but they never stopped. A month later, Auntie reached out again, suggesting another possible location in Coorg. Their meticulous research and unwavering perseverance in their quest were evident in every word of her email. Auntie wrote, "We have read that Col. Beddome found it in the Coorg region in the mid-1800s, and Captain William Munro found it in 'Mysore' in 1843." I tried to explore through my colleagues in Chettahalli and Gonikoppal stations in Coorg, but in vain.

Though we didn't find the South Indian clone, the *R. clinophylla* they gifted me now grows wildly in my rose field, filled with blooms, floriferous, and a good

seed setter

In 2014, at the Regional World Rose Conference in Hyderabad, and again in 2020 at the World Regional Rose Convention in Kolkata, I attended primarily because of the affectionate invitations I received from them. It was a wonderful experience meeting so many rose lovers from diverse fields, all bound together by roses. Uncle and Auntie were the thread connecting us all, making sure everyone was comfortable and introducing me to so many rose enthusiasts. No matter where I went, they always had a contact to share, ensuring I received warm support from fellow rose lovers.

It's difficult to express what 'Uncle Viru' meant to me and the depth of my loss. I'm still reeling from it. Soft spoken, a true lover of roses, and a silent mentor knowing he was there gave me strength in my work. Even in his absence, Uncle Viru's spirit lives on in every bloom, every plant that he shared. Knowing he was there, with his soft spoken guidance and steadfast support, gave me the courage to continue my own journey. Though he is no longer with us, his legacy will forever inspire me to approach my work and my life with the same dedication, love, and quiet strength that he embodied.

Remembering Viru

Tom Carruth

E.L. & Ruth B. Shannon Curator of the Rose Collection
Huntington Library, Art Museum & Botanical Gardens
San Marino, California, USA



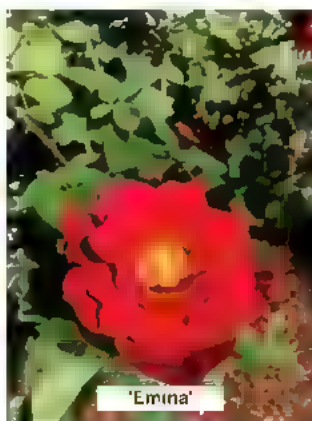
My memories of Viru and Girija go back to 2006. Their names were familiar and I knew of their wonderful work in roses. But we got an opportunity to actually meet face to face when they came to Pasadena, California to be honored as the Great Rosarians of the World held at the Huntington Library, Art Museum and Botanical Gardens.

Just as guests were arriving at the Hotel, before the next day's ceremony, I came into the lobby and saw Viru's big beaming smile from across the room. Eventually, we got to shake hands and

begin to talk about what else, roses. The two of them were always so kind and welcoming. Their passion for roses was a driving force for their marriage and their lives. They were most deserving of the Great Rosarian honour.

When I came to work at the Huntington six years later as Curator of the Rose Collection, I was pleasantly surprised to learn one of my Docents was a mutual friend. Emina Darakjy had met Viru and Girija at the GROW event in 2006 and became good friends...enough of a friend to inspire Viru to name a rose in her honor. In our collection of over 1300 rose cultivars, we still have the 'Emina' rose as well as 'Magic East'.

Emina kept me updated on the Viraraghavans. We were both shocked to learn of Viru's sudden passing. He will be sorely missed. Yet what he's given to the rose world will live on for generations.



The Viru I Knew

Tuan Ching
Rose hobbyist
Singapore



Viru Viraraghavan was a man whose generosity and eagerness to share his wealth of knowledge set him apart in the world of horticulture. Our friendship began ten years ago at a World Federation of Rose Societies conference in Hyderabad and was enriched by numerous encounters, including memorable meetings in New York City and India. Each visit with Viru and Girija deepened my appreciation for their passion and commitment to roses

One particular conversation stands out as a testament to Viru's generous spirit. I had mentioned my collection of old French tea roses, when Viru, with his characteristic enthusiasm, spoke of a remarkable Tea/Noisette hybrid he had once created. This hybrid, he explained, was a breathtaking and unique shell pink shot with gold—but unfortunately, it did not survive for long due to some mishap. Instead of keeping this information to himself to replicate the cross someday, Viru encouraged me to attempt the cross, believing in the stunning result that could be achieved and the kind of success in rose hybridizing that had eluded me thus far. In a field where many might guard such insights jealously, Viru's unselfishness and willingness to share were truly remarkable. This encounter was just one example of Viru's dedication to advancing the art of rose breeding. He viewed knowledge as a resource to be shared, not hoarded, and took great joy in seeing others succeed.

Viru's approach to rose breeding was truly unique and innovative. One aspect I greatly admired was that his creations did not follow the current trends in the commercial rose world. Instead, they stood out for their individuality, charm, and

hardness. His roses featured elegant, tapered buds that opened into languorous, relaxed blooms, nodding gracefully in the breeze. These roses often displayed intense or unusual colours and colour blends, reminiscent of blooms from a century ago, making them spectacular in their singular beauty. Varieties such as 'Somasila' (Spice Trail) and 'Manipur Magic' exemplify this uniqueness – no other modern roses look quite like them. Most of them did not have complex breeding lines, but the intention was clear, with a solid understanding of the parentage traits.

One thing that Viru and I had in common was our interest in roses that grow and thrive in the equatorial lowlands. We shared a fascinating theory that roses which truly flourish (or at least thrive with above-average longevity) in hot, humid zones are often triploids (like some of the old China roses, one of which is growing in my Singapore garden at 15 feet tall). Each time we met, no matter how brief, we always had something new to add to this ongoing discussion. Who knew what might have come of this if we had more time to work on it? Our shared curiosity and collaborative spirit fuelled a sense of excitement and possibility, underscoring the innovative thinking that Viru was known for.

The last time we met was in Calcutta, right before the pandemic of 2020. The group of us had wandered into a famous seed and bulb shop, and we felt like kids in a candy store. The shelves were stocked with all kinds of fertilizers and fungicides. Of course, Viru was in his element. All I had to say was, "I wonder what this is good for," and sure enough, in his gentle, fatherly manner, he would expound with a depth of knowledge, often with a humorous anecdote attached. It was usually some simple but clever manoeuvre or step that one had to take, yet his explanations always illuminated the path to better gardening.

During the COVID lockdown, for some strange reason perhaps it was cabin fever or nonstop gardening I had several vivid dreams of Viru and Girija writing their memoirs. How many more insights and discoveries lay dormant in the recesses of memory? If our brief encounters had gleaned me such riches, what would an entire book contain? I even texted Girija once, right after I woke, much to her amusement. And, of course, this dream eventually came true with their book, *Roses in the Fire of Spring*.

Viru's legacy extends far beyond the roses he bred and the gardens he nurtured. It lives on in the countless individuals he inspired and mentored, each carrying forward his vision of a world where beauty and knowledge are shared freely. His approach to gardening was rooted in collaboration and community, principles that continue to influence those who had the privilege of knowing him.

Tribute : A Legendary Rosarian

Vijay Kant

M.S. Viraraghavan, fondly known as "Viru" in his close circles, was a beloved figure and a stalwart in the world of roses.

As one of the founding members of "The Hyderabad Rose Society," established in Hyderabad in 1974, Viru Uncle's passion for roses was unparalleled. During his tenure as Principal Secretary of Agriculture in the undivided state of Andhra Pradesh, I had the privilege of knowing him personally. From that time, I saw firsthand his humility, soft spoken nature, and the thorough gentleman he was.

In 1980, he took voluntary retirement and settled down in Kodakanal. There, he focused even more on his love for roses, hybridizing over 100 new cultivars. His dedication and expertise gained him global recognition, and in 2006, he was awarded the 'Commemorative Medallions' by the World Federation of Rose Societies (WFRS).

Viru Uncle was not only a very humble and soft spoken individual, but also a thorough gentleman with a good sense of humor. He served as the Vice President of the society for many years, leaving an indelible mark on the community. His passion for growing roses, nurtured since childhood, was evident in all his achievements and contributions.

Through his work and gentle demeanor, Viru Uncle has left behind a garden of memories that will forever bloom in our hearts.



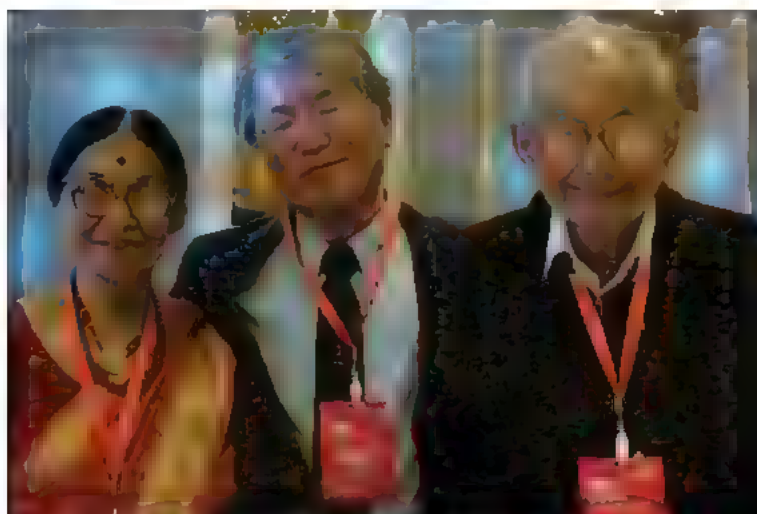
Vijay Kant (centre) with Viru at a Hyderabad Rose Show

My Memories with M. S. Viru Viraraghavan

Wook Kyun Kim
President, South Korea Rose Society
South Korea

My last meeting with M S Viru Viraraghavan was on 9 June 2023, six months before his death, at the Motel One hotel in Brussels, Belgium. I was attending the 15th WFRS International Heritage Rose Conference where I had the pleasure of meeting with him and his wife Girija and spent a few days in the same hotel. At the conference, as at other WFRS events where Viru Viraraghavan was presented, his presence as a rose breeder and as a rose historian and culturalist earned a high respect.

I recall that his final lecture at the conference, 'A great taxonomist and the world's largest rose- a magical interaction', told the story of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, when *Rosa gigantea* was collected in northern Burma, brought to the West via the Sibpur Botanical Garden in India, and given to a Western taxonomist, where it was named and started to be bred. In retrospect, the Viraraghavans explored Ukhruil on the Myanmar border in search of the Indian



With Wook Kyun-Kim, Belgium, 2023

form of *Rosa gigantea* more than 35 years ago and found a huge wild *gigantea* plant. He collected seeds and sent them to gardens and researchers studying roses around the world. This has stimulated interest in *gigantea* breeding in the United States, New Zealand, South Africa, Australia, Japan, and elsewhere. I thought it is fitting to find the original source of his lifelong contribution to the breeding of *gigantea* hybrids and present it to us at this conference. In doing so, he reminds us of his life's work and implores future generations to carry on and develop his will and achievements.

'Roses in the Fire of Spring' is his new book, which was introduced during the conference, and is a summary of his life's work with roses. In the end, it is a kind of last will, tantamount to a testament that he wrote before he left us. The book takes its title from Omar Khayyam's *Rubaiyat*, and the introduction of the book ends with one of his favorite verses from the *Rubaiyat*.

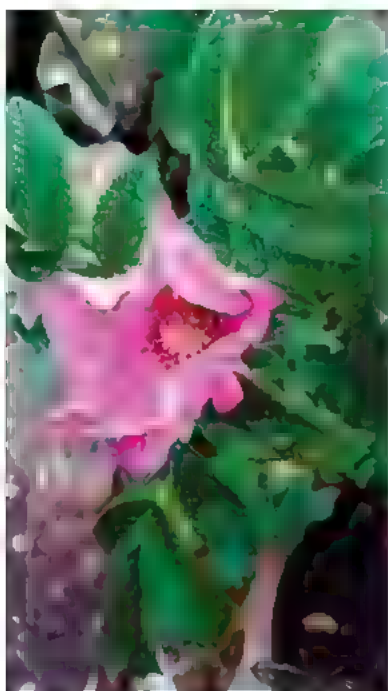
It was during the WFRS regional conference in Kolkata in January 2020, just before the COVID Pandemic hit the world. Viru, Girija, and I and a few others had a lovely dinner at Sonargaon, an authentic Indian restaurant in the Taj Bengal Hotel, at the invitation of Sushil Prakash, where Viru told me the story of the naming of a rose he bred, 'Allegory of the Spring', which was inspired by Sandro Botticelli's *The Birth of Venus*. Historically, Sandro Botticelli and Omar Khayyam were long forgotten by the public until the Victorian era, when they were made famous by the work of Pre-Raphaelite artists such as Dante Gabriel Rossetti, John Ruskin, and William Morris. Coincidentally, they were all passionate about roses, as was Viru Viraraghavan. The links between Viraraghavan, Botticelli, Khayyam, the Pre-Raphaelites, and the rose were probably not coincidental. There must have been some kind of intuition, some kind of inspiration, a force that manifests itself in those who sincerely desire and strive. They were reborn by Viru Viraraghavan.

I recognize the cultural historical significance of roses in India as a gateway to the West, and I appreciate the rose research that Viru has traced and explored in this regard. I have been keeping Korean rosarians informed of his activities through the pages of *Garden Magazine* in Korea. We were intrigued by his story of roses coming from China to India along the Himalayan mountain pass trade routes, or the ancient maritime Silk Road, prior to the Indian route for the western migration of the Four Stud Chinese roses from the late 18th century. We were also impressed by the story of the stone tablet that records the cultivation of a 13th-century repeat-flowering rose in a temple in Gujarat (Somanatha) on the west coast of India, known as the 'Sintra Prashasti', and his enthusiasm for exploring Sintra, Portugal, in search of this tablet.

Viru's sudden death came as a surprise to many rosarians and was a great loss. I.

for one, am deeply saddened and regret that he left us without having had the opportunity to visit South Korea once, in connection with roses. Every time I visited the City of Sakura Rose Garden in Japan, I saw the garden that Katsuhiko Maebara had created for Viru and the roses he had bred. If I had been able to attend the WFRS Heritage Rose Conference in Sakura in 2012, there would have been much more rose talk between him and me. However, I didn't have that opportunity until 2013, when I attended my first WFRS conference in Sangerhausen, Germany, and first became aware of the activities of the Rose Societies. At some point, as if he needed a reminder of Korea, Viru told me that he had bred a specific *rugosa* hybrid rose and wanted to name it in reference to Korea. I suppose he thought of it because the Korean peninsula was the origin of *Rosa rugosa*'s natural habitat. In any case, we needed a little more time to get to know each other.

M. S. Viru Viraraghavan and his works will be cherished by many rosarians as an eternal fire that exists beyond time.



'Our Friend Wook-Kyun Kim'

To Viru, Who Loved Roses

Yoshihiro Ueda (Dr. Agr.)

Project Manager, World Rose Convention Promotion Office, Fukuyama City

Director, Gifu World Rose Garden, Japan



My sincere condolences go to Viraraghavan family

I first met Viru and his wife at the Heritage Rose Conference in Sakura City of Japan in 2012

I still remember eating with them on the tour and feeling sorry for them as they were having trouble with all the

food they couldn't eat. At that time, I felt very close to them because of their kind behavior and attitude.

Since then, we sometimes exchanged information with each other by e-mail and SMS, and exchanged rose stem and seeds

Rosa climophylla and *R. gigantea*, both native to India, are among the roses they gave me.

R. climophylla is native to the low lands of India and is heat tolerant and similar to *R. bracteata* which is native to the Ryuku Islands in Japan.

R. gigantea in India is native to Manipur of North east India

In 1999, I went to Laos to explore ancient China roses which have their origins in China

During our expedition, I found one rare species, *R. tunquinnensis* native to Laos. They were quick to learn that I had found a rare species in Laos and requested me for a plant of this species. I believe that they were thinking of using the rose which grows wild in low latitudes, for breeding in India.

Their collection of roses indigenous to India, and the use of them to breed rose varieties suited to the Indian climate, is truly admirable. The roses they bred have survived the hot and humid Japanese summer and growing well in the rose garden in Sakura City, Japan.

Fortunately I could meet Viru last year (2023) at the Heritage Rose Conference in Brussels, Belgium. He looked to be in good health at the time, but it is a pity that he passed away shortly afterwards and we will miss him very greatly.

Gifts from Viru

Yuki Mikanagi

Curator of Herbarium,

Natural History Museum and Institute

Chiba, Japan

There are so many memories with Viru that it is hard to decide what to write about, but I have chosen three. In 2006, after the WFRS World Rose Convention in Osaka, Viru and Girja visited the City of Sakura Rose Garden. They were so kind to donate many of the roses raised by Viru to the garden, and on that day, Viru named a beautiful hand-painted rose that was blooming there as 'Blushing Yuki' after me. Parentage of this variety was 'Silver Jubilee' × 'Priyatama'. 'Priyatama' is also one of the roses raised by Viru, and the name means 'beloved' in Sanskrit, and named for Girja, so, 'Blushing Yuki' is a daughter of Girja!

The next one was a memory after the Regional Convention in Hyderabad in 2014. Katsuhiko Maebara, Makoto Hiraoka and I were invited to Viru and Girja's house in Kodaikanal - a beautiful stone house and surrounding garden in the highlands of South India. Not only roses raised by Viru, but also rhododendrons, magnolias and other rare plants were abundant in the garden. He took me to the natural habitat of *Rosa leschenaultiana* (Thory) Wight & Arn., near his house, which I had hoped to see someday. This is a wild rose, a species that grows only in the highlands of the southern tip of the Indian continent.



With Yuki Mikanagi, Sakura, Japan 2012

The last one was the trip Viru, Girja and I made from China to Japan in the spring of 2019 after the regional convention in Nanyang, China. And Viru and Girja gave a lecture to Japanese rose lovers at the City of Sakura Rose Garden. The title of the lecture was "Variety is the Spice of Roses". This lecture gave me a clearer understanding of how Viru perceives ROSES and where he finds the joy of rose breeding.

It is sad to realize that we will never see Viru again, as we used to see him every year, somewhere in the world, at the international rose conventions, and it was always a pleasure to see and hug him, he was like a father figure to me. I would like to carry on Viru's spirit of inquiry, as he spent all his life chasing the charm of roses.



'Bushing Yuki'

List of Papers published by Mr. M. S. Viraraghavan in the Indian Rose Annuals

*Co-author : Girija Viraraghavan

(We are proud that all the rose breeding work Mr. Viraraghavan carried out was published in the Indian Rose Annual. We are happy to give below the complete list of the titles of his papers including articles on other important topics.)

1. **Vermillion Rose** : Past, Present and Future Vol **01**, pp 122, 1980
2. Better Roses for India, **01**, 155, 1980
3. **New Approaches to Rose Breeding** : The Arisumi Papers **.02**, 17, 1982
4. Vistas in Rose Hybridization **03**, 10, 1983
5. Aristocrats of the Rose World (India's Wild Roses and a Few Others). **04**, 59, 1984
6. **First Steps in Rose Hybridization with *Rosa clinophylla* (*Rosa involucrata*)**. **05**, **54**, **1985**.
7. The Eye of the Beholder, **06**, 61, 1987.
8. On the Scent of Scent. **07**, 95, 1988
9. In Memoriam Dr B P Pal **08**, 05, 1990
10. Rose Breeding for the Tropics **09**, 45, 1991
11. Rose Growing Abroad. **10**, 16, 1992
12. A search for *Rosa clinophylla*. **11**, 17, 1993.
13. Rose Pigments and Rose Breeding The Findings of C H Eugster and E Mark Fischer and their application. **12**, 41, 1994
14. *Rosa gigantea* blooms in Kodaikanal **13**, 137, 1995.
15. Is *Rosa clinophylla* the lotus of the rose World? **14**, 32, 1998
16. Better Roses for the Tropics Breeding with *Rosa gigantea* **15**, 18, 1999.
17. Tropical Rose Breeding and Beyond **16**, 34, 2000
18. New Bloodlines for Breeding in the New Millennium with an emphasis on warm climate rose breeding. **18**, 33, 2002
19. Roses in the Gardens of New Zealand and Australia **18**, 66, 2002 *
20. Rose Breeding for Warm Climates **19**, 47, 2003

- 21 Roses at the Cape of Good Hope **19**, 60, 2003 *
- 22 Rose Wanderings in Europe .**20**, 95, 2004 *
- 23 Francois Crepin and the Discovery of *Rosa gigantea* **21**, 61, 2005 *
24. New Frontiers in Rose Growing: The Evergreen Roses .**23**, 51, 2007
- 25 In Remembrance of Dr B P Pal Indian Rose Heritage and the Roses of Tomorrow **24** , 07, 2008
- 26 Wild Roses in India and Himalayas **24**, 46, 2008
- 27 Sustainable Rose Growing and the Breeding of New Roses **25**, 19, 2009
- 28 Patio Roses. A New Class in the Making **27**, 58, 2011
- 29 Mystery Roses of India .**28**, 18, 2012. *
- 30 Sustainable Rose Growing An Indian Dream **29**, 41, 2012
- 31 Roses in Many Lands **30**, 39, 2014. *
- 32 Sustainable Rose Breeding Growing for Tropical Asia Some Possibilities. An Editorial Overview **31**, 05, 2015. *
- 33 Born in the Forest, Reborn in the Garden. **31**, 143, 2015. *
- 34 Two Rose Mysteries An Appearance and a Disappearance **32**, 14, 2016 *
- 35 Frank Kingdon Ward the Man, the Rose **33**, 06, 2017. *
- 36 Shri Mushti Laxmunarayana. **34**, 33, 2018. *
37. Another Great Botanist, Another Great Niece and Her Rose “Lady Jane Hooker“. **35**, 133, 2019. *
- 38 The Rose Named for E.K.Janaki Ammal **35**, 147, 2019. *
- 39 John Sullivan and His Rose **35**, 187, 2019. *
40. Intrepid Roses- How Roses Reached Indian Gardens by Perilous Paths, Treacherous Seas, Swamps and High Mountains **36** , 159, 2020 *
- 41 Richard Rose and the Discovery of *Rosa chinophylla*. **38** , 46 , 2024. *

First steps in Rose Hybridization with *Rosa Clinophylla* (*ROSA INVOLUCRATA*) M. S. Viraraghavan

For some time now, the prospect of breeding an entirely new strain of rose with the genes of *Rosa clinophylla* (*R. involucrata*) has fascinated hybridisers in India. This is for the simple reason that this species, native to the plains of Bengal and adjacent areas, is probably the only rose species in the entire world that is found in the tropical regions, and as such, hopefully carries the genes for heat resistance. Prima facie, this species should also have resistance to water logging as it is normally found near streams and marshy places. In fact, the clone which is now with me was collected by Mr Narender Singh of Ranchi from the dense clumps of the rose, growing wild with their roots partially in the stream bed of a stream in a forest near Ranchi (Chota Nagpur Plateau, Bihar, now Jharkhand State).

According to the classification in the 'Chromosome Atlas' of flowering Plants by C D Darlington and A P Wylie, *Rosa clinophylla* is part of sub-genus *Bracteata* within the sub-genus being confined to two species, *Rosa clinophylla* and *Rosa bracteata*. The latter, also referred to as the McCartney Rose, is native of Southern China and Northern Burma, and is found in similar very moist situations by the sides of streams etc.,

From the material sent by Mr Narender Singh, attempts to propagate *R. clinophylla* were made in two ways, one by cutting and the other by budding on to stocks of *Rosa multiflora*. Propagation by cuttings was not successful but budding on to *R. multiflora* produced approximately 40% take. The budded plants grew away quite rapidly and now, after two years, are well over 6' tall, with an upright moderately branching habit.

The plant has a close resemblance to the bramble (raspberry) as was long ago observed by Firminger in his book *Complete Gardening in India*. A distinctive feature is the brown mottled bark, curiously similar to the mottling found on some types of snakes. Flowering on the budded plants started in spring (April in Kodaikanal) of the second year after they were planted down in the ground. The flowers are single, with five petals, white, with fairly thin substance. The most attractive feature is the bright golden yellow stamens, which, when dehiscing, have a characteristic fragrance of acetone (like nail polish remover) which characteristic it shares with *Rosa bracteata*.

In general, this rose in Kodaikanal closely conforms to the description in Dr. B. P. Pal's book, *The Rose in India* - 'A stout, erect or semi-climbing shrub, flowers white, borne singly or in clusters, fruits roundish, hairy and pale'. The flowering continues for a long period, with peak flowering in April and May, and scattered flowers thereafter. It may be said to be almost continuous flowering although not, unfortunately, to the same extent as *R. bracteata*. Also, this species is quite susceptible to both mildew and black spot, whereas *R. bracteata* is not affected to the slightest degree by either of these two diseases.

The foliage is light green, deeply veined with 5-7 leaflets, with the apex leaflet considerably elongated, oblong to oblong-lanceolate in shape. The foliage is shining above and glabrous beneath. The curious involucres (i.e. groups of bracts enveloping the young inflorescences) are another feature by which this species can easily be recognized. Again there is a close resemblance here to *R. bracteata*. Under Kodaikanal conditions the hips take a very long time to mature-nearly six months, as against the normal four months for the Hybrid Teas. Each hip contains from 5-10 fairly small seeds.

Rosa climophylla is a diploid with 14 chromosomes, unlike modern roses which are tetraploid (28 chromosomes). Any programme of breeding with this species has, therefore, to take into account the difference in chromosome number. Fortunately, the Tea roses which are quite fertile, under Kodaikanal conditions, are also diploid and are the obvious choice for breeding work with this species. Experience shows that when working with species roses it is easier to use the species as the male or pollen parent and this principle was followed during the first year, 1985, when two series of crosses were attempted with *R. climophylla* as the male parent. The first group of crosses was with the pink tea rose, 'Mrs. B. R. Cant' (?) which bears abundant self hips under Kodaikanal conditions, with a pale cream Tea rose, 'Mme. Hoste' (?), and the climbing white tea Noisette, 'Lamarque'. The second series of crosses with *R. climophylla* as the male parent was done using some very fertile standard tetraploid roses including 'Little Darling' (Fl), 'Queen Elizabeth', 'Independence' and 'Lover's Meeting'.

The results, as could probably have been anticipated, were quite disappointing with no seeds at all from the large number of crosses with 'Lamarque', and with 'Mrs. Hoste'. A few were sown in September 1985 but they have not sprouted to date - October 1986. Of the crosses with the tetraploids, the cross with 'Little Darling' produced fairly good seed set, there was also some seed set with the crosses with 'Queen Elizabeth' and 'Independence', though 'Lover's Meeting' was a complete failure. Seeds from these crosses, sown in October 1985, have not yet sprouted and the prospect of sprouting now seems remote.

Attempts were also made to use *R. clinophylla* as the seed parent with pollen from *R. bracteata*, on the logic that the two are closely related and so the cross should be easy. Out of a large number of crosses there was a fair percentage of success and to date, six seedlings have sprouted but not yet flowered. Looking at the seedlings it would appear that at least two or three may be genuine crosses as the foliage looks nearer to *R. bracteata* than to *R. clinophylla*, but we can reach firm conclusions only after the first flowering, which hopefully should be in the spring of 1987.

During 1986, with the *R. clinophylla* plants having grown much bigger and stronger, the same breeding strategy more or less was adopted. With *R. clinophylla* as pollen parent a large number of crosses were made with several Tea roses, including 'Mme Hoste' (?) 'Mrs B.R. Cant' (three different clones with probably one at least being a different variety altogether), with a buff coloured tea, 'Safiano' (?) and with two climbing Tea roses, one a cream with pink edges 'Gloire de Dijon' (?) and the other light lemon yellow-'Celine Forestier', as also with the diploid polyantha Tea, 'Celine Brunner'. For the second year running, 'Mme Hoste' refused to oblige and of the three variants of 'Mrs B.R. Cant', good seed was set by only one. A very large number of crosses with 'Cecile Brunner' successful. A few seeds came with the cross with 'Gloire de Dijon' (?) but none from 'Celine Forestier'.

With tetraploid seed parents the crosses were repeated using 'Little Darling' with some success, and a fair number of seeds have been harvested to date. Naturally results will have to wait for sowing time which will be only later in the year.

Reverse crosses using *R. clinophylla* as the seed parent and *R. bracteata* as the pollen parent were repeated. There has been appreciable take but the hips are yet to be harvested (October 1986).

As would be evident from what has been described above, breeding work with *R. clinophylla* is not going to be easy. It is quite disappointing that the Tea roses should be so reluctant to set seed with *R. clinophylla*. A success with this strategy would have made progress much easier. But perhaps one of the few seed from the 1986 Tea crosses will sprout? With a bit of luck maybe a few seed with 'Little Darling' as the seed parent should also germinate. While I do not intend to give up perhaps the work requires a younger rose breeder (in his '20s) or a research institution.

THE
INDIAN ROSE ANNUAL V



The Indian Rose Federation

Alphabetical List of Viru Roses

There are so many memories with Viru that it is hard to decide what to write about, but I have chosen three. In 2006, after the WFRS World Rose Convention in Osaka, Viru and Girja visited the City of Sakura Rose Garden. They were so kind to donate many of the roses raised by Viru to the garden, and on that day, Viru named a beautiful hand painted rose that was blooming there as 'Blushing Yuki' after me. Parentage of this variety was 'Silver Jubilee' x 'Priyatama'. 'Priyatama' is also one of the roses raised by Viru, and the name means 'beloved' in Sanskrit, and named for Girja, so, 'Blushing Yuki' is a daughter of Girja!

1. Abide with Me	Tea
2. Achanta	Hybrid Tea
3. Adriana Zarri	Hybrid Gigantea shrub
4. Agnumitra/Ruhu Thallon	Hybrid Gigantea shrub
5. Ahimsa/Orient Silk	Hybrid Tea
6. Ajatashatru Kasturi	Hybrid Gigantea shrub
7. Alister's Gift	Hybrid Gigantea shrub
8. Allegory of Spring	Hybrid Gigantea shrub
9. Amaravathi Nymph	Hybrid Chinophylla shrub
10. Amber Cloud	Hybrid Gigantea climber
11. Anita's Rosy Touch	Floribunda.
12. Aussie Sixer	Tea
13. Barbara Wood, Heart o' Roses	Hand painted shrub
14. Belle Sakura	Hybrid Gigantea shrub
15. Bhagmati	Floribunda
16. Bhavani Nymph	Hybrid Chinophylla shrub
17. Blushing Yuki	Hand-painted shrub
18. Bodhisattva/Magic East	Hand-painted shrub
19. Chantal's Kolam	Hand-painted shrub
20. Churachand	Hybrid Gigantea shrub
21. Coffee Country	Floribunda
22. Colours of Innocence, Saatvik Mani	Hand painted shrub

23	Dixie Beauty Deccan Beauty	Tea
24	Dr Malcolm Manners /The Manju Rose	Hybrid Gigantea shrub
25	Dr N C Sen. Maria Cecilia Freeman	Hybrid Gigantea shrub
26	Dream in Cream	Hybrid Gigantea climber
27	E K Janaki Ammal	Hybrid Clinophylla shrub
28	Emuna	Hybrid Gigantea shrub
29	Evergreen Gene	Hybrid Gigantea climber
30	Faith Whittlesey	Tea
31	Flame of My Heart	Hybrid Gigantea shrub
32	Fluttering Wings	Tea
33	Forever Daniela	China. Bengale
34	Frank Kingdon Ward	Hybrid Gigantea climber
35	Full Circle	Hybrid Gigantea shrub
36	Ganges Mist	Hybrid Clinophylla shrub
37	Ganges Nymph	Hybrid Clinophylla shrub
38	Garnet Crest	Tea
39	Geethakumari, Guntur's Gift	Hybrid Gigantea shrub
40	Golden Threshold	Hybrid Gigantea climber
41	Hakone Star	Hybrid Hirtula shrub
42	Helga's Quest	Hybrid Gigantea shrub
43	Incense Indigo	Hybrid Tea
44	Ingrid Verdegem	Hybrid Tea
45	Ivory Chalice	Hybrid Gigantea climber
46	Jay Hiers	Hybrid Gigantea shrub
47	Jeri's Purple Jewel	Shrub
48	Jessica Grace	Hybrid Clinophylla shrub
49	Kamalendumati Shah/Royal Friend	Hybrid Clinophylla shrub
50	Kanchi	Hybrid Tea
51	Kanyakumari	Climber
52	Karne's Rose	Hybrid Gigantea climber
53	Kindly Light/Swami Vinayananda	Hybrid Gigantea shrub
54	Krishna's Peach	Tea
55	Kusabue's Guardian Angels	Hybrid Gigantea climber

56	Lady Jane Hooker	Hybrid Gigantea climber
57	Lanlique Rose	Hybrid Gigantea shrub
58	Leschenault de la Tour	Hybrid Leschenaultiana climber
59	Lyndy's First Love	Rose Edward shrub
60	Maebara's Dream	Hybrid Gigantea climber
61	Magnanimous Marriam	Grandiflora
62	Manipur Magic	Hybrid Gigantea climber
63	Maura la Cava	Tea
64	Meghamala/Wine Dark Sea	Hybrid Gigantea shrub
65	Mia Grondahl	Hybrid Gigantea climber
66	Mikimori Ogisu, Plantsman Extraordinaire	Hybrid Chinensis spontanea climber
67	Momoko's Magic Touch	Hybrid Gigantea shrub
68	Monsoon Magic	Hybrid Gigantea shrub
69	Moon Halo	Hybrid Gigantea shrub
70	My Faire Lady	Tea
71	Naga Belle	Hybrid Gigantea shrub
72	Narmada Nymph	Hybrid Clinophylla shrub
73	Nefertiti	Hybrid Tea
74	New Blush	Hybrid Gigantea shrub
75	Nobuo Shirasuna, Landscaper Supreme	Hybrid Gigantea climber
76	Our Friend Wok Kyun Kim	Hybrid Rugosa shrub
77	Our Indra	Hybrid Tea
78	Out of India	Hybrid Gigantea shrub
79	Padmasambhava/Lotus Born	Hybrid Gigantea shrub
80	Pam of Angel Gardens	Hybrid Clinophylla shrub
81	Pat Henry/Narender	Hybrid Clinophylla shrub
82	Pat Shanley	Hand painted shrub
83	Pennar Nymph	Hybrid Clinophylla shrub
84	Pink Prelude	Hybrid Gigantea shrub
85	Priyatama	Hand-painted shrub
86	Rajni/ Orient Spice	Hybrid Tea

87	Raman Effect	Hybrid Chinensis spontanea climber
88	Rebecca's Choice	Hybrid Gigantea climber
89	Remembering Cochet	Tea
90	Remembering Nico/Swatantra	Hybrid Gigantea shrub
91	Richard Rose	Hybrid Clinophylla shrub
92	Ripples on Lake Ashi	Hybrid <i>Hirtula</i> shrub
93	Rose Legend Akira Ogawa	Hybrid Laevigata rosea shrub
94	Rose Diamond Nagavajara	Polyantha
95	Rose Sullivan	Hybrid Tea
96	Sakura Sunset	Hybrid Gigantea climber
97	Salute to Graham	Hybrid Chinensis spontanea climber
98	Sergio Rose Savant	Tea
99	Sheenagh Harris	Hybrid Gigantea shrub
100	Silk Road Sprite	Hybrid <i>Hulthermia persica</i> shrub
101	Silver Dawn	Hybrid Clinophylla shrub
102	Sir George Watt	Hybrid Gigantea climber
103	Sir Henry Collett	Hybrid Gigantea climber
104	Sir Vere Henry Levinge	Hybrid Gigantea shrub
105	Sirohi Sunrise	Hybrid Gigantea shrub
106	Somasila	Hand painted shrub
107	Spot On	China/Bengale
108	Stephen's Dream	Hybrid Gigantea climber
109	Takako, Tradition's Torch	Hybrid Clinophylla shrub
110	Takamasa Tsuge, Rosarian's Rosarian	Hybrid Gigantea climber
111	Tamarabharani	Hybrid Tea
112	Tangkhul Treasure	Hybrid Gigantea climber
113	The AHSI Bicentenary Rose	Hybrid Gigantea shrub
114	The M.S Swaminathan Rose	Hybrid Tea
115	Tiger of Mysore	Hand-painted shrub
116	Tipu's Flame	Hand-painted shrub
117	Twilight Secret/Rose Anil	Hybrid Tea

118	Twilight Tryst	Hybrid Tea
119	Vaigai Nymph	Hybrid Climophylla shrub
120	Vanamali	Hybrid Tea
121	Viru's Ruby Pendant	Hybrid Climophylla shrub
122	Wayward Child	Hybrid Gigantea climber

For description, parentage, colour and other details of each rose variety, please refer to www.HelpMeFind.com/roes

Roses in the Fire of Spring Better Roses for a Warming World & Other Garden Adventures by M.S. Viraraghavan & Girija Viraraghavan (Running Head Books, 2023) contains a near-complete list with descriptions of the rose varieties.

https://roses.shoutwiki.com/wiki/Kategorie_Viraraghavan has a list of all the rose varieties and all articles written by Viru in the *Indian Rose Annuals* and in other publications.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dSFdbOwNOOU> is a 10 minute video on Viru's journey in roses

Our Breeding Adventures : Richard Wals

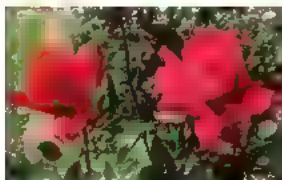
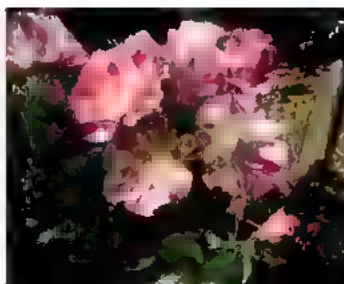
Richard Walsh Roses, Australia



After hearing a lecture back in the late '70's by Bert Anderson, a former President of the Rose Society of NSW on breeding roses I became inspired to try it for myself and made my first crosses in 1980 with no successes at all! In 1981 I made my first successful crosses after deciding that the reason for my first failures was no real pattern for the approach and no real goals set, so the second time around, I tried to keep it a bit simpler by doing multiple

crosses, both ways using the same two parents (with one exception).

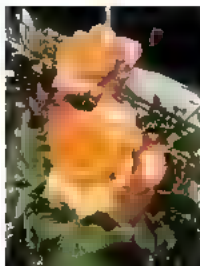
I chose for my parents 'Pink Parfait' and 'Masquerade', using both as seed and pollen parents, because at the time I had a fascination with Floribundas and roses which changed colours like 'Mutabilis'. Among the seedlings that eventuated, one was quite acceptable, though not as good as the parents (one of our criteria), but had little fertility for breeding on. A second did not have the same garden potential, but was fertile and suitable for breeding on. We eventually lost the "better" garden variety, but the genes of the second exist in some of our current registered varieties, one of which, 'La Fillette', won us an award for Best Shrub in trial in Adelaide



I also made one other cross that second year and created a rose which I still grow, 'Eddie'. It was bred from 'Living' x 'Uwe Seeler', and helped me to form my first set of goals. It became obvious to me that you need to have objectives, and while these have been modified over the time, they have developed into where we now stand

Initially, the aims were

1. To grow a rose from seed achieved;
2. To grow a rose from seed pollinated by me done,
- 3 To grow a rose using at least one of my seedlings as a parent done,
4. To grow a rose with commercial potential and I believe this has also happened several times over



In time the aims became more focussed. Australia, like India, has a rose society that organises rose shows or exhibits of a competitive nature. These imply a particular type of rose that is favoured by the rose society exhibitors. The roses being imported from America and England often reflected these needs, but those from Europe did

not always. In recent years the European roses which dominate world markets are becoming more and more like the shrubby landscaping types and their more formal ones are more in the style of the David Austin roses. To cater for this gap in the market, I decided to concentrate on the formal traditional (exhibition style) Hybrid Tea and my wife, Ruth, concentrated on Miniature and Miniflora roses, suitable for picking and the show bench



While the public seems to respond positively to the roses we post on Facebook, it has not been easy to gain support from the major rose growers who are mainly importers, but we have managed to arrange for a number of our roses to be distributed. We have especially found a reluctance to propagate and promote the smaller varieties although I believe they have a strong future. While we have not made fragrance a major goal, we accept it as a bonus, as long as it does not impact on disease resistance, vase life or heat tolerance.

What do we look for in one of our seedlings? It should be better than either of its parents...or different in some novel way. In varying degrees of importance, we would consider the flower, the health and the plant in our "definition" of perfection:

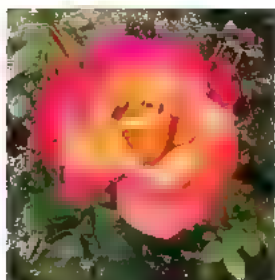
1. The flower would need to have a pleasing colour(s), an attractive form and novelty (which implies different but not ugly or weird) or "wow" factor. Some would include fragrance as well, but it has the previously mentioned

drawbacks, so if you could have it without the drawbacks, that might be considered part of the ideal (but then you would open the door for questions like what kind of fragrance would you consider the perfect rose to have);

- 2 Ideally the plant would need to be immune to disease, but diseases are constantly mutating so this may not be a realistic expectation. Perhaps tolerance, resistance or the ability to recover from an attack is what we would require long term. In Australian conditions, heat and drought tolerance also comes into the equation;
- 3 An ideal plant should be well covered in attractive foliage that will look good in the garden even when the plant is not in bloom. Bare stems do not look good and may allow the plant to be affected by hot sun. The foliage and stems should be proportional to the blooms. The growth should be balanced, even and vigorous (which does not necessarily imply big or tall)

Another disadvantage we “amateur” breeders have is that we are only one generation. We are not a dynasty, backed by a huge corporate organisation with worldwide influence. For this reason we have a limited life span as far as breeding roses is concerned. Our organisation has 2 workers who do what they do for the love of roses. In our biggest year we planted 13,000 seeds, but age is catching up and we are only planting about 3,500 this year. We also are reassessing our goals and looking to the future – or what we can contribute to it.

The greatest compliment anyone could pay us would be to use one of our seedlings or breeding lines in his/her breeding. In studying the origin of rose varieties, we realise it sometimes takes more than one person to complete a breeding goal. I remind myself that the work begun by Herb Swim with *R. soulieana* was developed further by Jack Christensen and finally brought to fruition by Tom Carruth in such varieties as 'Long Tall Sally', 'Ebb Tide', 'Soul Mate' ('Julia Child') and 'Route 66'. We have grown each of these and had a measure of success breeding with 'Soul Mate' and 'Route 66'. We love to research the new roses and try to acquire plants of those with “new” Species in their



breeding. It is therefore an endless source of frustration when breeders do not register their roses with their breeding record.

We see this as our latest (last?) direction. The future in rose development lies in the many Species Roses (or near Species) not yet in the breeding records. We would like to contribute something like Herb Swim (and others) has, by

providing some breeding lines for Species not yet in the hybrid mix. We have begun with several including 'Canary Bird', 'Golden Chersonese', *R. x harisonii*, *R. bracteata*, *R. laevigata*, *R. moyesii* 'Geranium', *R. carolina* and *R. pisocarpa*. I am gratified that 2 of these are developed sufficiently to warrant registering. One has even gained a trial garden award and now grows in the International Rose Garden in Adelaide ('Brush Strokes' bred from 'Golden Chersonese') and one is listed in HelpMeFind as the only "modern" offspring from it ('Eric's Rose' bred from 'Geranium'). Others are only at the F1 stage of development and are works in progress. They are our real legacy.

Australia being in the Southern Hemisphere does not have its own native roses to work with as in Europe, India and other parts of Asia.

Another nod to the future we have undertaken late in our careers is the development of a trial garden in the mild, humid conditions of the East Coast of Australia (at Mulgoa in Western Sydney), where the majority of our population live. Ruth and I both serve on the committee of management. We only hope some younger ones will also join us as it is a work in progress for the future of rose breeding in Australia.

And so for now the adventure continues...



With Richard Walsn in Ahmed Alam Khan's Hyderabad Rose Garden 2017

A Dream to Be a Rose Breeder

Ping Lim

Director of Ornamental Plant Research,
Altman Plants, San Diego, California, USA

Not just for all the technical know-hows, but also years of financial commitment, it would take a professional rose breeder up to 10 years to release a new rose on the market. Can an amateur breeder be successful in overcoming these obstacles to become a professional rose breeder?

I was not so sure if I could be one of the rose breeders as it was my dream in my youth. Today a few roses that I have been involved in hybridizing that keep winning international prestige awards and are distributed globally are 'Love & Peace', 'Easy Elegance' and 'True Bloom' series (www.rosesbyping.com)

Sam McGredy, after immigrating to New Zealand, said that he was so lucky to do the breeding work with less financial burden, which means he could excel his talents in rose breeding by himself, and so have Chris Warner, Frank Benardella, Jerry Twomey and Bill Radler. They all illustrated significant contributions to the rose world by their own efforts without a boss.

Yes, with the incentive rewards from the respected plant patent protection law, just like any other business venture, possibility is based upon many factors, including how hard one tries and how much luck one has.

Rose breeding work started in the mid 19th century in Europe but the big boom was in the mid 20th century (1930) since the enforcement by the US plant patent law, just as the magnetism force to the rose breeders around the world could earn revenue from their creations. Roses then became the most popular flower and the most economical asset. According to the USDA's 2014 Census, the overall value of cut roses sold in the United States reached \$22,165,000, adding to garden rose plants that were estimated to be worth \$203,558,000 and continuously growing.

To date, there are more than 40 thousand cultivars of roses listed in "Modern Rose 12" and hundreds of new roses are launched around the world annually to share the market places.

Yes! More crosses increases the chances of reaching the money makers. So the investment could go deep as well, so focusing on narrowing the risk is a must. I am so lucky that I started concentrating my work on low maintenance garden

landscape roses which have become the trend in today's world

I did learn from these successful breeders who drove me into the rose breeding world, and I am especially obliged to Jerry and Chris plus a few others I am pleased to share the following theme to encourage more youngsters to become rose breeders, otherwise at least to offer further discussion.

Phase 1. Set up and prepare parent plants for pollinations.

January-March. Set up and prepare parent plants

April to July: Cross pollinations

October: Harvest and sort hips

November to December. Scarify hybrid seeds

January: Sow seeds by parentages

Parental selection is one of the most critical parts of the hybridization process. Beginning with the right parents means saving time and money in the pursuit of a winning rose. "Tigers give birth to tigers".

"Modern Rose 12" provides the list of 40 thousand plus cultivar sources of modern and old classical roses, and more than 200 *Rosa* species. Among all these, only around 10% are being used in breeding, which offer prolific genetic diversity to advance breeding work. Therefore, the chance to create new roses is a very encouraging business. So it makes it possible to create a beautiful rose that compounds most of the horticultural value such as disease resistant, compact, hardy, healthy bush, beautiful, fragrant, re-blooming with prolific blooming power, easy in propagation.

Deciding which parents to incorporate into a new cross is the first step. Pollen viability and female fertility are two essential factors to seed setting. The closer the background of both female and male parents' pedigrees, the easier it is to accumulate their similar characteristics by back crossing. However, the downside to this "in line breeding" is lesser variation, lost vigour and increased weakness. A hybrid cross produces greater vigour and greater variation. A wider cross produces more variations. But it takes a much longer time to incorporate all desired characteristics.

Phase 2: Select seedlings.

May to December: Primary positive selections

Field evaluations and comparisons are the most critical as well as costly parts of a breeding program. It might take up to 10 years of persistent investments for a favorable outcome. No synthetic chemicals should be applied during the seedling growing period, especially no fungicide from day one of testing. Constant

observations and note taking should be completed by the end of the season

In the first stage, each seedling should be evaluated, and data should be collected in the seed bed and in the open field for a minimum of 3 years. Evaluations with note taking should be performed as often as possible. These records should be kept as accurate and simple as possible.

Phase 3. Propagate selected seedlings.

June to October: Rooting elite selections

Ten cuttings of each selection should be propagated and followed for 3 years from the original selection. These should be planted in different climate zones for at least 3 consecutive years, including commercial trials.

Phase 4 Secondary Selection by distributing seedlings to various geographical trials

April to June: distribute seedlings to global trials

After years of evaluation, propagated selection's progeny should be sent out for further geographical trials in partnership network testing sites, and/or submitted to participate in internationally associated competitions. Winning awards provides stronger promotional strength. Evaluation should emphasize the combination of the following features: Disease and insect resistance, Hardiness, Fragrance, Quick blooming cycle, Prolific in blooms, Easy to grow, Easy to propagate, Compact, Vigour, Novelty, Thorn free, Shade tolerance, Stress resistance, Long-lasting blooms, Heat and drought tolerance, Geo-adaptability, Vase life, etc..

Phase 5: Final selection

September: Propagation schedules

Own root cutting is one of the most effective ways to multiply selections in comparison to budding or grafting. This method also saves time and cost, which eliminates rose mosaic viruses that can be carried over from a budding rootstock. Tissue culture to speed up building up elite varieties is also suggested for mass production.

Phase 6: Register, apply for patent and commercialize.

January to December: Marketing application trademark, register, patent, POP (point of purchase)

As soon as a decision is made to introduce a variety commercially, one should ensure that the creation is fully protected by the plant patent law. This is an incentive reward for breeders to be compensated for their investment and provide financial security. It takes more than a year to process a patent application. Any

seedlings commercially released to the market after a year, or 5 years overseas, do not qualify for US patent application. Registering and trade marking brand names can also provide further security for promotions. Four key criteria in acquiring a successful plant patent are 'novelty', 'distinction', 'uniqueness', and 'stability'.

There are increasing concerns over global climate change and the impact of synthetic chemicals on our environment. Making a strong progress in developing beautiful roses that can withstand these stresses is no longer an option but a mission to all rose breeders. There are hundreds of cultivars produced each year around the world, and there is no room for another rose that does not exhibit the characteristics of unique beauty, health, and re-blooming.

"Flowers always make people better, happier...." by Luther Burbank, indeed by all means "Rose is the flower of flowers that could make a dream come true too."!

Growing Roses from Cuttings

Malcolm Manners
Florida Southern College,
Lakeland Florida, USA

1. **Choose the right plant material :** While there are multiple parts of the plant that might successfully make roots, the easiest and most successful will usually be a stem that has just flowered. It has either dropped its petals, or the petals are fading and getting ready to fall [ILLUSTRATION 1]. Cut a piece of stem perhaps 7-15 cm long, with several leaves on it. I like to have at least two, preferably three leaves remaining [ILLUSTRATIONS 2 AND 3]. I also make the stem long enough to break off a leaf or two at the base.
2. **Wound the base of the cutting :** We usually use a knife to peel the bark from one side of the bottom 1-2 cm of the cutting, then turn it over to the other side and repeat the process. We are not removing bark the whole way around, just two narrow strips [ILLUSTRATION 4].
3. **Use a root-promoting hormone :** Various materials are marketed under different brand names, but look for something with Indole-3-butyric acid (IBA) at up to 0.3% active ingredient. Apply that to the wounds on the cuttings as the package directs. This step is optional, many roses will root well without use of a hormone, but it can be very helpful with more difficult varieties [ILLUSTRATION 5].
4. Plant the cuttings in a well-drained soil, perhaps 2-3 cm deep, gently pressing the soil around the cutting. Avoid compacting the soil any more than necessary. The soil should be damp but not soggy wet.
5. Protect the cuttings from dehydration. At Florida Southern College, we use an intermittent mist system that sprays a mist of water over the cuttings every few minutes, throughout the day [ILLUSTRATION 6]. But for the home gardener, you can accomplish this by covering the cuttings with some sort of tent -- perhaps a plastic bag or a cut-off 2-liter soft drink bottle. Humidity will build up inside that enclosure, preventing the cuttings from drying out [ILLUSTRATIONS 7, 8, 9, 10].
6. Put the covered pot in an area that gets bright light, but not where it will overheat and cook in mid-day sun. Against the north wall of a building or under a tree can work well.

- 7 Most roses will have some roots after 4-5 weeks. It takes longer in cool weather, but you may have better success then, than you would in very hot weather [ILLUSTRATION 11].
- 8 Once the rose has developed a good root system, it may be transplanted into a larger pot and eventually, into the garden

Illustration 1 : A cutting at the ideal age of maturity. Flowers are fading, yet the side buds have not begun to grow yet.

Illustration 2 : The flowers are trimmed away, leaving a cutting with 2-3 leaves and a long enough base to be buried in the soil

Illustration 3 : A group of properly trimmed cuttings

Illustration 4 : A 1-1.5 cm wound is sliced into the base of the cutting, and a similar cut is made on the opposite side of the stem.

Illustration 5 : If using a rooting hormone, it is applied lightly to the wounded area.

Illustration 6 : Cuttings in Florida Southern College's intermittent mist system. It sprays a mist of water over the cuttings for a few seconds every five minutes, throughout the day

Illustration 7 : Several possibilities for maintaining humidity for the cuttings without an intermittent mist system.

Illustration 8 : A 2-liter drink bottle, cut apart. The base is filled with soil, and the top is fitted onto it

Illustration 9 : Using a glass jar

Illustration 10 : Cuttings can be potted and then covered with a plastic bag. We use bamboo stakes to hold the bag up

Illustration 11 : After a few weeks, the cuttings should have good root systems, and may be repotted.



Illustration 1

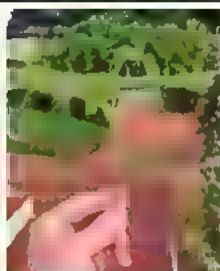


Illustration 2



Illustration 3



Illustration 4



Illustration 5

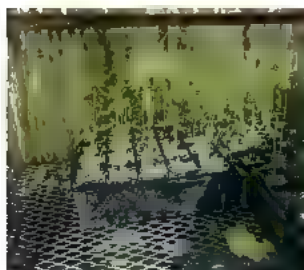
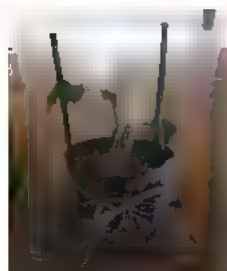
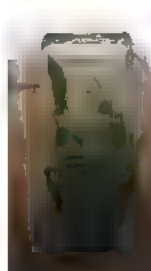
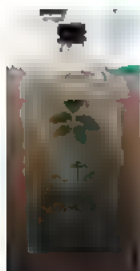


Illustration 6



Illustration 7



In the Footsteps of the Master

N. V. Shastri

nvshastri@rediffmail.com

(* Dedicated to the memory of M S. "Viru" Viraraghavan)



The rose bug bit me in 1976 and I started growing roses under the guidance of Prof. P .H Kulkarni , a senior colleague in Nagpur university , and a renowned rosarian of Nagpur He also inducted me in to exhibiting roses

I started reading the rose literature available in the library of Nagpur Garden

Club which has a good collection of gardening books and periodicals That includes Dr B P Pal's "All About Roses "and of course the classic "The Rose in India" that strengthened my bond with roses Being on way to become a show bench addict , I came across some articles on Rose Breeding I found them complex and intimidating Then I came in contact with Shri Braham Datt (BD), a senior rosarian of Nagpur who used to display his flowers in our rose shows Some of his entries had unfamiliar names and I came to know that they were thenew roses created by him He was the only rose breeder in Central India , and several of his creations had become popular outside Nagpur also When I started regularly winning prizes at rose shows and had collected quite a few trophies he felt I have had enough number of prizes and insisted that I mustnow try my hand at breeding which he said is a much more fruitful , creative and rewarding activity. When I told him that I find it rather difficult and complicated , he assured me that it was nothing like that and invited me to visit his garden at his house to give a live demonstration

Soon enough , In January 1980, I went to his house with Prof Kulkarni where BD had his rose garden of about 500 large pots and innumerable small pots he used for growing his seedlings It was a big garden and he also had a whole lot of

different flowering and fruit plants. He demonstrated the protocol of pollination and described all other details right from selection of parents to selection of seedlings. Though I found the whole process most fascinating I still felt hesitant. The pressure of job (teaching and research) and family duties was high. I doubted if I could devote sufficient time to make it a success.

Around middle 1980s, (BD) inducted me in to Indian Rose Federation as a life member and I attended my first IRF convention in 1987 at Hyderabad. I now had an opportunity to make friends from all corners of the country and also from other countries and a chance to meet and interact with eminent rosarians. It was here that I first met Mrs Girija and Mr M.S. Viraraghavan who were already recognised as the rising stars of Indian Rosedom. Mr Viraraghavan (MSV) was reputed as a rose breeder with difference. The first technical session was a revelation. Among the papers presented, the most striking talk came from MSV. I quickly realised that he had chosen a path in his breeding programme that nobody in our country had taken before though such possibilities had been indicated by a few early breeders. His passionate arguments in favour of creating roses using indigenous species that would grow well in hot dry and even marshy conditions in Indian plains made a great impact on me. For the first time I heard about the "species" roses, *Rosa chinophylla*, *Rosa bracteata* (the two are closely related), and *Rosa gigantea* and the exciting possibilities they could give rise to. He proposed to use them in his future breeding programme and try to create their hybrids by crossing them with each other and with other species roses, old garden roses and also modern garden roses. Since the species he chose are vigorous growing, floriferous, comparatively disease resistant and with attractive ever green foliage, he argued that these attributes are likely to be inherited by their hybrids. Thus new lines of breeding roses suitable for Indian conditions could be created. The stories of how he acquired these species from distant places make fascinating reading. Viraraghavans have described in details the adventurous journeys they undertook to locate and acquire samples of desired rose species from distant locations in their magnificent book "Roses in the Fire of Spring" published in 2023 and already a classic. After BD's goading, it was MSV and his work that firmly motivated me to venture in to Rose Breeding. The Hyderabad convention was the turning point in my journey as a rose enthusiast. And the fact that MSV, a brilliant civil service (IAS) officer had chosen to take voluntary retirement from service at the peak of his career to devote fulltime to his passion for roses was simply awe inspiring to all of us. It has been very difficult to resign to the fact that he is no longer with us, having passed away in December 2023. But there is no doubt that he is one of the

immortals of the Indian rose world

For the first few years as a breeder, I had followed the commonly treaded path in my breeding work in which I selected the popular varieties I was growing in my garden taking care that at least one parent was an exhibition variety. The hangover of competition was still there! During this period, I also made some systematic studies, collecting data relating to the breeding parameters in Nagpur. These included - best period for cross pollination (December middle of February), percentage of fruit setting (37), Average number of seeds per fruit (07), germination rate (06% for total No of seeds and 16% for sinkers), better season for sowing the seeds (Dec and Jan). For the first two years I sowed only sinkers but somehow did not throw away the floaters. In the third year, just for fun, I also sowed the floaters I had collected so far. Surprisingly, quite a few of them germinated and some of them turned out to be good! Henceforth I started sowing all the seeds I got.

I was lucky to get good results pretty early, actually in my first season of hybridizing! A seedling from a cross of Sahasradhara x Pristine looked promising and in due course, with the permission of BD was released after his name as "Brahm Datt". I also started to work with a certain goal in mind. For example in one season the goal would be fragrance or a particular color etc. and in majority of crosses that season, parents would be chosen accordingly. Another approach I have been taking is to get every year, latest cultivars imported by the premier rose nursery of India, "KSG Son", Banagalore, and include them in my breeding program. I also started showing my roses at local shows and also at IRF convention shows and won prizes!! At one such conventions I met Shri G. Kasturirangan (of KSG Son), himself a great rose breeder, who suggested to me that if I could give him the bud wood of my varieties he could propagate and release them through his nursery. It was a God sent opportunity, a dream come true! My roses would never have crossed the boundary of Nagpur. If I had not received encouragement from him. As a matter of fact all Indian amateur rose breeders have received similar help from him. In his passing away a few years ago, we rose breeders have lost a friend, philosopher and guide. His son Sriram is continuing the great legacy his father.

During the same period, I was attending the IRF conventions regularly, participating in the technical sessions and rose shows and was keenly following the progress of the work undertaken by MSV which he presented at almost every convention. I was struck by the level of perseverance, rigor, patience, vision and commitment that was involved in the work. To begin with, large number of permutations and combinations in pollinations were made. *R. chinophylla* and *R.*

bracteata were used as pollen parents and crossed with polyantha, tea roses etc. A cross of *clinophylla* with *bracteata* was also made. In some experiments these two were used as seed parents with a variety of rose types including the hybrid teas as pollen parents. Results suggested that this approach would be more fruitful. Attempts were also made to increase the chromosome number in the *clinophylla* x *bacteata* progeny. These carefully planned experiments gave rise to several repeat flowering bush roses in various colors that were used in further work. MSV at this juncture also decided to look at the possibilities of using *R gigantea* to create roses better suited to the tropics. *Gigantea* as a pollen parent was crossed with well known hybrid teas, old garden roses and also with species roses including *clinophylla* and *bracteata*. Some promising hybrids were obtained.

In Nagpur conditions species roses do not flower but their hybrids are expected to do well. When some hybrids generated by MSV were reported in the Indian Rose Annual and a few became available with M. S. K. Soni, I planned to use them in my breeding protocols, thus changing the focus of my work. On one hand Viraraghavans were kind and gracious to send me the bud wood without hesitation whenever I requested them (I am deeply grateful to them for this) and on the other I got plants of selected MSV varieties from KSG every year. I have been using these hybrids both as seed and pollen parents in my work for the last several years. The first MSV cultivar I used was "Ganges Mist" (2005) classified as Shrub Hybrid *clinophylla*, that bears nice looking buff apricot flowers. The parentage of this rose is as follows:

Alliance x (Montezuma x [Aurthur Bell x (Little Darling x (*R. clinophylla* x *R. bracteata*))]).

In early years of this kind of work I also used Naga Belle, a *gigantea* hybrid. As of today I have tried a number of MSV roses. So far the cultivars that have given successful fertilization as seedling, pollen parent or both include Faith Whittlesey (*gigantea* hybrid), Maura L Cava (derived from F Whittlesey), Aussie Sixer (*gigantea*), Vishnu Priya (*gigantea*), Janakiammal (*clinophylla*). I have so far released three cultivars derived from MSV's roses. They are:

Gavilgarh: HT, ((Mascotte x Red Recker) x Ganges Mist). Silvery Pink, somewhat like "Memorial Day". Massive, shapely, long lasting.

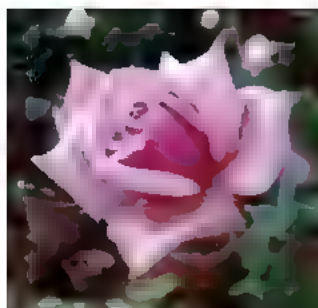
Janu (Crystal Ball) HT (Moondrops x Naga Belle), White Pink blend, Shapely, lasting.

Big Pink HT, (Red Alert x Naga Belle) Deep Pink, lasting, Big, High Centre.

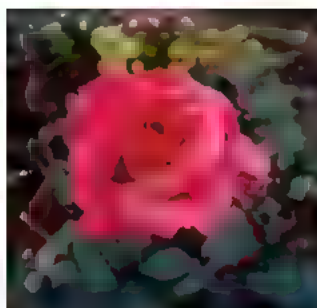
During the last five years or so I have been able to obtain a sizable number of seedlings derived from MSV's roses and have been watching them carefully. But on account of some personal difficulties I have not yet been able to take them further. However they are well maintained and I do hope I would be able to work on them in near future. My predominant approach henceforth shall be to continue to use species hybrids created by MSV. I sincerely hope I shall be able to get a few cultivars that would have pleased him.

Finally, a few words about MSV roses from a different perspective. His main interest and motivation in rose breeding was to create roses that do well in the harsh tropical and subtropical heat of Indian plains. To achieve this, he initiated the use of indigenous rose species. Though his roses are specifically suited to our conditions, beautifully ornamental with pleasing pastel colors easy on the eye, most of them are either single or semi double and have non HT type shapes. His roses are admired and grown outside India and have won prestigious awards. Our people somehow, do not seem to appreciate the beauty of any other shape in roses than the HT type. MSV himself has lamented this fact in one of his articles published in IRA. Rose experts recognise three broad flower forms in roses: the hybrid tea, and old roses, and the single rose. To quote him: "One other form is of course the single rose. As you know all wild roses have this form and we should appreciate the simple artistry of God's own creation. Often to our chagrin we hear people remark that the single rose does not look like a rose at all! On the other hand as we progress in our aesthetic appreciation of roses we soon realise that the single rose is indeed a hallmark of the beauty of the rose."

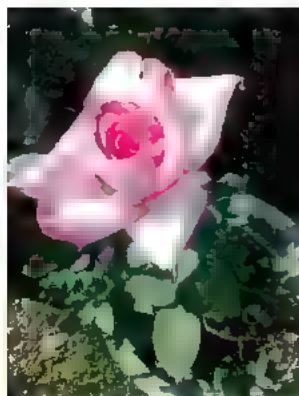
In this context, given the kind of roses MSV has created, it is imperative for us to see to it that his roses are not only conserved but are widely grown in Indian gardens, both public and private. There fore the big issue now is how to kindle the active interest of our rose lovers in MSV roses (especially his species hybrids) so that they appreciate their beauty apart from other obvious advantages they offer. IRF and our Rose Societies have a job to do and should take up this issue and work out what could be done. At the end of the day, it is the duty of all of us to ensure that the MSV roses continue to delight us for generations to come and inspire our young breeders to take forward his work. That shall be the real tribute Indian Rose fraternity can pay to the memory of M S "Viru" Viraraghavan.



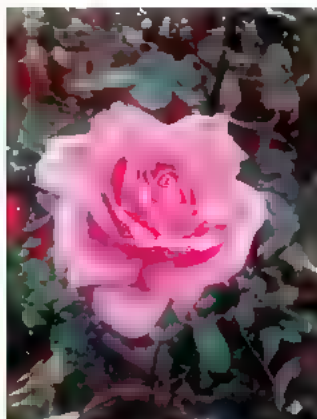
Gavilgarh
(Mascotte x Red Recker) x Ganges Mist)



Big Pink
(Red Alert x Naga Belle)



Janu
(Moon Drops x Naga Belle)



Dr Shastri'S Rose

My Journey

Ashish D. More

Happy Rose growing

Mobile No 9850818381

Characteristic shapes and attractive colours of roses created interest of rose growing in me. In the beginning, I started collecting rose varieties giving priority to shapes and formation of roses. I regularly attended rose shows, gathered information on roses and practically applied this information in my rose growing. In 2005 I exhibited my roses for first time in the Winter Show of Pune Rose Society. I won a First Prize and four Second Prizes and also 'Best H T Champion White Rose' trophy for rose 'Mount Shasia'. My curiosity to know how ranks are allotted to winning blooms peaked and I started examining each winning bloom by comparing with others. With many questions in mind I started noting down my own observations. On that occasion a senior rosarian (Mr. Pundalik Nimhan Sir) who is a renowned rose breeder and exhibitor from Pune approached me. He was very kind and enquired about my rose growing. We had a good discussion on roses. His experience in growing roses helped me to get answers to most of my questions. Nimhan Sir introduced me to another senior rosarian, the late Mr. Kumbhojkar. We all had general discussion on roses. His enthusiasm for roses was boundless. He explained to me growth characters and merits of most prizewinning blooms in the show. I was very lucky to meet and learn from all the respected rosarians in my first rose show. On his invitation we all visited Mr. Kumbhojkar's house. His terrace garden was fully occupied with around 500 different varieties of potted rose plants. He explained each and every characteristic of the roses he grew. He gave an inspirational speech on rose growing. Those three hours we spent together provided me valuable information on various rose varieties. He motivated me to grow new roses and also helped me in getting rose varieties from his known sources. Thipse Sir (Past President of IRF and Pune Rose Society) helped me in getting many rose varieties.

In 2007, at the All India Rose Convention Pune, I exhibited my roses and the exhibition hall was filled with thousands of roses with participation from Ranchi, Kolkata, Jabalpur, Nagpur, Mumbai and Pune itself. I won Queen of the Show trophy for 'Indian bred H T Rose' with my 'Blue Ocean' and 'Maximum Aggregate Points' trophy in this show. Roses displayed were really a feast to my

eyes I was busy finding new rose varieties in the show. One old couple approached and congratulated me. They were eager to know more about my winning with 'Blue Ocean'. As grower I explained the growth habits and merits of this Indian bred rose. They both smiled and introduced themselves as breeders of this rose. Mrs. and Mr. Hande. I was very surprised. They happily shared information on other rose varieties bred by them and also invited me to visit their rose garden. Next day, Mr. Nimhan and I visited them. Dr. Y. K. Hande was working in his rose garden. He took us to his roses and introduced each and every variety grown in his garden which were all bred by him. He shared all the details of parentage, physical characters of blooms like colour, shape, formation. It was all new to me but very interesting. I was curious to know how he created new rose varieties. My first visit to his place was fruitful and I learned lots of new things about roses.

I started gathering information on rose breeding referring books, and learning the hybridization process in roses. During the Pune Winter Rose Show in January 2008, I again visited Mr. Hande's house. He was working on cross pollination. I got the opportunity to see the actual process, he explained to me the hybridization of roses with a practical demonstration. I was lucky to learn from him. The things I learned are as follows:

1. Hybridization in roses is carried out during the period of December to January.
2. Seed parent is selected for pollination. When flower buds from selected parent start opening, remove all petals and anthers carefully without disturbing the stigma, then cover the ovary with plastic or paper bag till the next day to avoid cross pollination by insects (bees).
3. The next morning between 7 to 8 am anthers are collected from the selected pollen parent flower, when pollen parent flower bud starts opening. First remove all petals and then with the help of forceps, collect anthers in small glass container and store them in a dry and dark place till the afternoon when you will find yellow pollen grains on the glass dish container.
4. Cross pollination is carried between 12 pm to 3 pm. Now, remove plastic paper bag from prepared seed parent. You will find a sticky substance on stigma. Now with help of small painting brush apply pollen grains (yellow pollen powder) from stored dish container to the stigma of seed parent and then again cover it with plastic paper bag for another one week.
5. Tag a label to seed parent (ovary) with a code number on it. Note down the details of seed parent, pollen parents, date of cross pollination under the code number in your record book.

6. If the cross pollination is successful, formation of fruit (Rose hip) will occur within a period of one month.
7. Rose hip gets mature in 2 to 3 months turning into yellowish green in colour and will shrivel, indicating completion of fruit formation.
8. Now remove outer cover of hip, collect rose seeds and apply fungicide powder and store in polythene bag with small holes on it in room temperature for 2 months.
9. To break dormancy of seeds, apply cold stratification process, where rose seeds are stored in moist coco peat in a polythene bag with holes in and refrigerated for 3 to 4 months.
10. Rose seeds which sprout in coco peat can be planted in small plastic paper cups. Rest can be sown in the month of November in small plastic paper cups. Planting media is 40 % fertile fine particle soil + 40 % fine sand + 20% vermi compost.
11. Regularly water, then the seeds will germinate in one to two months, sometimes some may take 1 to 2 years to germinate.
12. First one month is very crucial for new grown seedlings as they are susceptible to various diseases and mites attack hence survival rate is very low.
13. Survived rose seedlings will sprout bud within one to two months. When the bud is fully open take the petal count, if it is above 10 then it is considered good. Now transfer seedlings in small pots for growth and keep under observation to study various physical characteristics for 2 to 3 year. Promising Blooms with well established growth can be considered for propagation.

I started my rose breeding work under the guidance of Dr. Y K Hande. During Rose Conventions I had the privilege to meet stalwart personalities like M S Viraraghavan, G Kasturirangan, Chiplunkar, Girja Aunty, Dr. N V Shastri, Subrata Ghosh and got valuable information personally on rose breeding, and later from the articles they wrote. I will always be thankful to all of them for their kind support.

Some rose varieties bred by me

1. 'PRS Golden Jubilee' 2011 ('Perfume Delight' x 'Madam President') Light pink blend, 25-30 petals, opening in perfect form, leaves dark green, vigorous growth free flowering tall growing variety.'
2. 'Indian Heritage' 2014 ('Lynn Anderson' x 'Lady X') Light mauve bloom with high centered opening star shape. Few thorns, foliage round shape. Growth is tall, upwards, free flowering.'

3. Harsh' 2016 ('Lynn Anderson' x 'Lady X') Magenta pink blend, blooms very attractive, medium size with 25 30 petals, Foliage small, elongated, suitable for pot culture. '
- 4 Best Friend' 2016 ('Lynn Anderson' x 'Lady X) Creamy white flowers on healthy stems, 30 35 petals opening to good form, growth is vigorous Diseases resistant '
- 5 For You' 2016 ('Lynn Anderson' x 'Lady X') Light pink, large, high centered blooms with 25 30 petals, foliage is glossy with thick thorns Exhibition class blooms on strong stems. '
- 6 Her Majesty', 2017. ('Sheer Bliss' X 'Honey Dijon') Light Apricot, high centered blooms with 30 35 petals opening in urn shape with thick substance, long-lasting blooms on medium size stem, suitable for pot culture '
- 7 Golden Arrow' 2018 ('Lady X' x 'Honey Dijon') Yellow, high centered blooms with 25 30 petals on tall stems, foliage small round, free flowering, garden variety '
- 8 Kamalja' 2018 ('Moonstone' x 'Carmousine') Bright orange bi colour blooms with 40 50 petals on strong stems, leaves glossy, disease resistant.

Impact of High pH and Alkalinity in Irrigation Water on Rose Cultivation: Challenges and Management

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Roses (*Rosa* spp.) are one of the most economically important flower crops, cultivated commercially in greenhouses and widely cherished in public and private gardens. However, rose cultivation faces challenges, particularly in managing both biotic and abiotic stresses. Abiotic stress may arise from poor quality water and soil, as well as harsh climatic conditions. Two important factors that determine the suitability of water for irrigation are pH and alkalinity.

Concentration of hydrogen ions (H^+) in water or other liquids is measured as pH. The ideal water pH for irrigation generally ranges between 5.0 and 7.0. Water with a pH below 7.0 is termed 'acidic,' while water with a pH above 7.0 is termed "basic" or "alkaline". pH 7.0 is considered neutral. While basic pH (above 7) is often referred to as 'alkaline pH,' it is important to differentiate between alkaline pH and alkalinity. Alkalinity refers to the presence of bicarbonates, carbonates, and hydroxides of calcium, magnesium, and sodium in water, typically expressed in milligrams per liter (mg/L) or parts per million (ppm).

A pH test only indicates whether a particular water sample is acidic, basic, or neutral, but it does not reveal whether the sample is alkaline. Water with high pH does not always have high alkalinity. However, water with high alkalinity will always have a high pH. High pH alone may not cause significant harm to soil fertility, but when combined with high alkalinity, it can adversely affect soil fertility and nutrient availability. High pH water can reduce the effectiveness of nitrogen fertilizers applied through irrigation. Long term irrigation with high pH water may also increase soil pH. Water with a pH between 7.2 and 8.5 is considered alkaline, and as pH rises above 8.2, the risk of sodium-related problems increases. Excess sodium in water, relative to calcium and magnesium, can damage soil structure. In addition to causing plant nutrient imbalances, water with high alkalinity can clog drip irrigation systems and pesticide sprayer nozzles due to the buildup of bicarbonates and carbonates.

Effects of Irrigation Water Quality on Soil Physical Properties : Irrigation water that contains a relatively high proportion of carbonates and bicarbonates of sodium can lead to soil alkalinity. When soil contains sodium carbonate (Na_2CO_3), the pH may rise to 8.5 or higher, which is due to the greater solubility of Na_2CO_3 and the resulting production of hydroxide (OH^-) ions through hydrolysis. This creates sodic soils, which are characterized by high levels of exchangeable sodium, typically more than 15%. The high sodium content can cause structural problems in the soil, such as the dispersion of clay particles, reduced infiltration, decreased hydraulic conductivity, and surface crusting. These issues decrease the soil's available water content and nutrient uptake, ultimately hindering plant growth.

Effects of Irrigation Water Quality on Soil Chemical Properties and Plant Nutrition : Long term use of irrigation water with high pH and alkalinity can significantly increase the pH of the growing medium. Alkalinity restricts plant growth by limiting water supply to the roots, which stunts root development and damages the plant's ability to absorb essential nutrients. Sodium ions in alkaline soils can also impair plant metabolism, leading to trace element deficiencies and nutrient imbalances, particularly calcium (Ca) and magnesium (Mg).

Continuous irrigation with water high in bicarbonates and carbonates can cause deficiencies in micronutrients like iron, zinc, copper, and manganese, all of which are less available at high pH levels. Iron chlorosis, a common problem in alkaline soils, results from insufficient iron availability. Additionally, high pH soils can limit the availability of phosphate, a vital macronutrient. These nutrient imbalances become more severe when plants are grown in small containers, as the limited soil volume is poorly buffered against pH changes. In container grown plants, the combination of high pH and high alkalinity is particularly concerning.

Effects of High pH and Alkalinity on Roses : Roses have traditionally been categorized as a salt-sensitive species, with salt injury reported at electrical conductivity (EC) levels between 0.5 and 3 dS/m. In regions with high pH soils, a persistent issue is the yellowing of young leaves accompanied by dark green veins (chlorosis), which is often a sign of nutrient deficiencies. Managing nutrients in greenhouse grown roses is particularly challenging, as changes in the pH and EC of the growing medium affect the availability of essential nutrients. The optimal nutrient uptake and crop production are regulated by ionic concentrations in the rhizosphere.

A pH above 6.8 in irrigation systems can cause salts to precipitate. When bicarbonates exceed 3 meq/L, they interfere with the uptake of various nutrients, which can severely limit plant growth. Bicarbonates also damage plant roots, reducing their ability to absorb nutrients and causing leaf chlorosis, which impairs photosynthesis. High concentrations of sodium (Na^+), chloride (Cl^-), and bicarbonate (HCO_3^-) in irrigation water negatively impact both the number

and quality of rose flowers produced. In polyhouse-grown roses, iron deficiency caused by high bicarbonate levels in water can result in 20-30% of roses being rejected as unmarketable.

Management of High pH and Alkalinity in Roses : To lower the pH of growing media, soil amendments like ferrous sulfate, aluminum sulfate, or elemental sulfur can be added. Soil microbes convert elemental sulfur into sulfuric acid, which reacts with carbonates to form carbon dioxide and water, thereby lowering soil pH. However, the amount of sulfur required to achieve this effect is substantial. For instance, 818.33 kg/ha of sulfur is needed to reduce soil pH from 8.5 to 6.5 to a depth of 6 inches. While effective, this method is expensive. Gypsum (calcium sulfate) is a more cost-effective soil amendment that reduces soil pH and provides sulfur for plant growth. Another option is to add organic matter, which, once decomposed, lowers soil pH and improves nutrient availability by chelating micronutrients like iron, zinc, and manganese.

Treating irrigation water to reduce bicarbonates before use is another effective approach. Reverse osmosis (RO) systems can filter out bicarbonates, though they also remove essential minerals and waste a significant amount of water, making them costly to operate. Alternatively, acids like sulfuric, phosphoric, or nitric acid can be added to irrigation water to neutralize alkalinity and lower pH. Sulfuric acid is the most commonly used due to its cost-effectiveness, moderate safety, and the added benefit of providing sulfur for plant growth. The amount of acid required to reach the desired pH is determined through titration in a laboratory, with a target pH of around 6.0 being optimal for plant growth.

Salt-Tolerant Rootstocks and Varieties : The most sustainable and cost-effective solution to manage high pH and alkalinity is the use of salt-tolerant rose rootstocks and varieties. The research work suggests that rose varieties could tolerate high pH conditions of about 8.0 by using root stock *Rosa Indica*. The primary roots though deteriorated under high pH conditions; the adventitious roots formed after the decay of the primary roots will be more tolerant to the high pH when *R. indica* is used as a rootstock. *Rosa indica* can also tolerate bicarbonate toxicity along with high pH, making it a good option for rose growers dealing with problematic irrigation water.

Breeding efforts to diversify rose varieties and rootstocks that can tolerate adverse abiotic conditions, such as high pH and alkalinity, require much more attention. Developing and introducing robust genetic traits to combat these stress factors will not only improve plant resilience but also ensure sustainable production in challenging environments. Enhanced breeding programs focusing on salt tolerance, nutrient uptake efficiency, and overall adaptability will be key to supporting growers facing these challenges. This is a crucial area of research that could significantly enhance the quality and yield of roses, even in less than ideal growing conditions.

Rose Breeding : A Targeted Approach for Developing Commercial Varieties

Tejaswini P.*, Sriram S.,
Sridhar V, Keshava Rao V,
and Priti Sonavane

Roses, renowned for their timeless elegance and versatile applications, represent a horticultural treasure trove. Admired primarily as garden flowers, roses are commercially cultivated for a myriad of purposes. Beyond their aesthetic value, roses are widely used in the food, pharmaceutical, cosmetic, and aromatic industries. They have significant international demand, with value added opportunities in essential oils and rose water.

For loose flower production, roses of multiple colors and varying sizes are cultivated in open fields.

For cut flower production, roses are grown under naturally ventilated polyhouses or fully climate controlled greenhouses. Roses can also be cultivated in open fields for cut flower production in cooler regions, with the selection of suitable varieties to meet domestic needs.

Multiple rose breeders from temperate countries, represented by different companies and nurseries, introduce new varieties to the market each year, protected by Plant Breeder's Rights. Additionally, several Indian hobbyists introduce varieties, particularly for garden displays and container cultivation. Prominent nurserymen and breeders have catalogues that growers can use to select varieties. Many public sector research institutes under the umbrella of ICAR and CSIR, are also involved in rose breeding and have released multiple varieties.

Strategies and Progress of Rose Breeding at ICAR IIHR

At ICAR IIHR, our rose breeding program focuses on developing commercially viable varieties that meet farmers' needs for ease of cultivation and market demand for easy transportation and long lasting characteristics.

A successful breeding program starts with hybridization using desirable parents. Parental selection is a critical step where we examine heritable traits and compatibility. We have collected and tested hundreds of varieties to determine which will produce the best progeny and have developed suitable breeding

strategies, resulting in multiple breeding lines.

Hybridization is the major breeding strategy, though mutation breeding is also employed, using gamma irradiation to create variation. Additionally, bud sports add variability, providing a pool of genotypes for selection. Seedlings tested on their own roots are advanced further based on a selection index. All selected breeding materials are budded onto suitable rootstocks for testing under different environments. Once stabilized, they are assigned an IIHR number. Pest and disease screening is an integral part of our rose breeding program. Prospective genetic materials are assigned national identification numbers (IC No.), and novel genetic stocks are registered with INGR numbers by ICAR National Bureau of Plant Genetic Resources (NBPGR), New Delhi. Based on performance evaluation and production potential compared to standard checks, genotypes are identified with our brand name "Arka" prefixed to their varietal names and released for commercial cultivation. Selected varieties with high commercial potential are registered with the Protection of Plant Varieties & Farmers' Rights Authority (PPV&FRA), New Delhi, to protect them with Plant Breeder's Rights.

Targeted breeding for a desired ideotype is difficult with the sporophytic approach, hence, we have developed a breeding strategy using gametophytic selection in our hybridization program to pool genes of interest. Breeding success depends on progeny selection in the sporophytic generation ($2n$), but this requires a large progeny population, which is limited by low seed germination rates. To overcome this, we focus on the gametophytic generation (n), specifically pollen grains. Coming from a heterozygous polyploid plant, these pollen grains contain millions of allelic combinations. By selecting the right pollen grains to combine with the ovule of the right seed parent, we enhance the probability of producing the desired progeny.

We started our breeding program by building breeding population with targeted traits. Breeding lines with good seed germination and desirable traits serve as our base population, advancing us toward developing ideal varieties. While roses are beautiful to behold, growers must contend with pests and diseases that attack the plants. Black spot (*Diplocarpon rosae*) and powdery mildew (*Podosphaera pannosa*) are two major diseases we address in our breeding program. Our research has revealed that resistant rose genotypes activate defense related enzymes (catalase, peroxidase, polyphenol oxidase, superoxide dismutase) and secondary metabolites (phenols and flavonoids) earlier than susceptible ones. Our work with black spot resulted in identification of resistant progenies such as

IIHRR 4-15-12, which is field-tolerant, and **IIHRR 3-7-12**, which is resistant based on low values of Percentage of disease index (PDI), Area under disease progression curve (AUDPC) and slow Apparent rate of infection (R). Additionally, we have also developed **Arka Nishkant**, a thornless rootstock resistant to both black spot and powdery mildew.

After years of screening and hybridisation, **IIHRR 13-4** was developed with purple flowers that are completely immune to powdery mildew. Challenged inoculation of the leaves under *in vitro* confirmed its immunity. Studies undertaken to understand the genetic and molecular mechanism behind resistance to powdery mildew disease in IIHRR13-4 led to the identification of eleven resistant gene analogues in the NBS domain of NBS LRR group of R genes. Transcriptome studies indicated the up regulation of PR proteins and putative disease resistant genes in IIHRR 13-4. Besides this, IIHRRs-1 (INGR No. 09049) and IIHRRs-2 (INGR No. 09050) have been registered with NBPGR for their resistance to powdery mildew.

In the case of insect resistance, we are breeding for resistance to thrips and mites. We have developed IIHRR 9-6, which can resist mites and IIHRR 2-9-8-1 that can resist thrips with minimal incidence of infestation. IIHRP 13 (INGR No. 10072) has been registered for its field tolerance to thrips. Besides these registrations for resistance, we have also registered roses IIHRR 3-18-2 (INGR No. 10071) and IIHRR 2-28-1 (INGR 10070) for having fewer prickles and long lasting blooms.

Another area we have been focusing is roses for value addition. Among the rose progenies we have developed for value addition, IIHRR 7-1 stands out for its high anthocyanin content. We have multiple selections of fragrant rose progenies with diverse aroma profiles, varying in the content and ratios of citronellol, geraniol, nerol, linalool, and rose oxide, resulting in distinct fragrant notes.

ICAR-IIHR Varieties Released for Commercial Cultivation

- **Loose Flower Production:**

- ◆ **Arka Savi** is popular with farmers for its ease of cultivation and high market demand. It produces purple-pink flowers in bunches, with a yield potential of 25-30 tons/acre/year. It also has a long shelf life (5-6 days) and is field-tolerant to black spot disease.

- **Cut Flower Varieties :** For cut flower production, **Arka Swadesh**, **Arka Pride**, and **Arka Ivory** are recommended. These varieties are known for their strong and long flowering stems, making them ideal for cut flower production with excellent vase life. Under naturally ventilated polyhouses,

these varieties produce flowers with stalk lengths exceeding 60 cm

Among these, **Arka Swadesh** and **Arka Pride** are also suitable for open-field cultivation for the domestic market. Depending on market demand, they can be harvested either as cut flowers or loose flowers

- ♦ **Arka Swadesh** features shiny foliage and striking red flowers
- ♦ **Arka Pride** is known for its vibrant orange flowers
- ♦ **Arka Ivory** is distinguished by its white flowers.

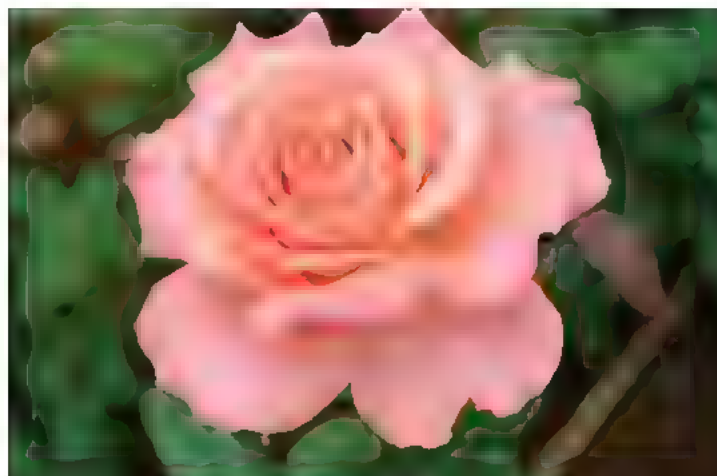
● **Fragrant Varieties :**

- ♦ **Arka Parimala** has fragrant red flowers and is rich in antioxidants, making it a potential candidate for nutraceutical industry with added benefits of colour and flavor. With field tolerance to thrips and black spot, it is easily amenable for organic cultivation, a valuable feature for use in edible products. With 0.04% of rose oil content, it is an ideal variety for the aromatic industry
- ♦ **Arka Sukanya** produces red-purple fragrant flowers with a concrete yield of 0.224% based on fresh weight of flowers. As a fragrant variety, it has potential for use in all rose aroma related products
- ♦ **Garden Varieties :** Popular garden display varieties include **Arka G.S. Randhawa**, **Arka Kiran**, **Arka Sinchana**, **Arka Sharmeeli**, and **Arka Kinnari**
- ♦ **Arka G.S. Randhawa** has peach-pink flowers that change to salmon pink along the border. With long stems and twisted unfurling of flower petals, these can be cut from the garden to make appealing floral arrangement.
- ♦ **Arka Kiran** has Tyrrian purple flowers that fade to Rose Bengal and is named after the presence of white streaks on some of its petals.
- ♦ **Arka sharmeeli** has its appeal with blooms of multiple colours on the plant at a time. From bud to different stages of blooming, the colour changes from light pink to different shades of red reminiscent of blushing cheeks.
- ♦ **Arka Sinchana** is a highly floriferous ever blooming floribunda variety that produces bright red flowers in bunches. Its coppery green leaves add to its charm.
- ♦ **Arka Kinnari** produces bi-colored flowers consisting of vermilion red shading towards orient pink. High-centered buds with a slow, twisted opening make it an attractive flower. Arka Kinnari is characterised by long stalks with clusters of flower and dark green shining foliage.

Future Outlook : ICAR-IIHR continues to make progress in rose breeding, with several advanced breeding lines in the pipeline with potential for further improvement and future release (<https://iihr.res.in/book-new/>) The focus remains on enhancing disease resistance, developing novel flower forms, and increasing the commercial viability of roses for multiple purposes, including ornamental use, cut flowers, and value added products



Arka Parimala



Arka Kinnari

Hybridization of Roses in India

Chandrakant More

Hybridizers of roses in India are initially hobbyists. Rose growers turned into hybridizers. They have a small place for gardening and a limited number of mother plants, so very few varieties are available for hybridization. After the fruit set and germination initially they grow a new variety on its own root. And then go for budding on root stock, if they feel that new variety is worth introducing. Hybridizers don't have time and space available for trials of new varieties. The hybridiser gives buds for budding purpose to a nursery. Nowadays, every year at least 150 varieties are introduced. But you will not find them on the show bench. Plants of that variety are not available with hybridizers or with nursery men. Years later, the new varieties vanish. Generally hybridizers give more importance to the colour and formation of new varieties but vigorous growth, disease resistivity and fragrance is also equally important. One variety which was introduced by the late Dr Y K. Hande was 'Ajanta Cave'. Its colour was like 'Double Delight'. He gave buds to many nurseries. All rosarians liked this variety but after a few years this rose was not available with any nursery. The reason was that it was susceptible to dieback. At the same time 'Blue Ocean' was introduced by him. This variety proved outstanding on the show bench. Twice it was the King of the Show in all India competition. This variety was vigorous, disease resistant and had a slow opening and perfect exhibition shape.

Indian Rose Federation has to work on standardization of Indian bred roses and for that purpose trial grounds are required. Since our country is large, having different climatic conditions minimum 6 trial grounds are required. Trial grounds are difficult to maintain from both financial and labour point of view. As rose societies and the Indian Rose Federation are non profit making organisations, government agencies, agriculture colleges, and municipal corporations having land and labour should step in so that with their support it is possible to maintain trial grounds. My suggestions are that new hybridised varieties should be introduced only after 3 years and after getting green signal from Indian Rose Federation. Plants of new varieties should be at least propagated for 3 generations particularly if they are mutations sports of roses. At the time of introduction minimum 20 roses in a bowl must be displayed along with 30 plants for the interested rosarian. I know my hybridiser friends will find this difficult but

with the help of a nursery man this could be possible. About 15 years back my two mini roses 'Rosy' and 'Jimmy' were introduced in two large bowls and at that time 75 plants of each variety were ready for sale.

Of course another good way to judge the Indian rose breed is in rose competitions where they will be judged with the roses from all over the world. In spite of so many difficulties Indian rose hybridisers has done a great job. It is a proud moment for them when the rose introduced by them gets King of the Show which is the highest award in a rose competition. The following varieties hybridised by the Indian hybridisers are honoured with the King of the Show.

1. **BLUE OCEAN** : introduced by the late Y K. Hande. Won twice and the exhibitor was Mr Ashish More.
2. **SAHYADRI** : hybridised by Shri Nimhan and the exhibitor was Mr Ashish More.
3. **BAHURUPI** : Hybridised by Mr and Mrs Ghosh. Won twice and the exhibitor was Mr Sahil Thombre.
4. **SHANKAR JAIKISHAN AND BRAHMA DUTTA** : Hybridised by Mr N V Shastri.
5. **SOMASILA** : Hybridised by the late M S. Viraraghavan.
6. **GENERAL VAIDYA** : Sport, Introduced by Chandrakant More. Won four times with Dr Vikas Maskar as exhibitor and twice with Shri Chandrakant More and late Datta Kumar Mhatre as exhibitors.

Indian hybridisers should get financial benefits so that more and more hybridisers will come forward to breed the best Indian roses. And rosarians will be happy to grow them. Rose lovers will be the most happy to see them on the show bench in large numbers.

M. P. Rose Society, Bhopal

Report of activities during 2023-2024

Avinash Galande
Secretary
M. P. Rose Society, Bhopal

On 1 December 2023, Executive Director of World Rose Federation of Rose Societies, Mr Derek Lawrence wrote a letter to Mr Sushil Prakash & President of Indian Rose Federation Smt Sanyogita Dhanwatey and informed that the Executive Committee of World Rose Federation has approved the application of Madhya Pradesh Rose Society for the 21st Convention of World Federation of Rose Societies in January, 2028. This is a matter of great pride for Madhya Pradesh Rose Society and Bhopal. This seven day international convention will be held in Bhopal from 7 to 13 January in the year 2028, in which more than 500 Indian and foreign rose experts are expected to participate.

We have been educating rose Lovers regarding rose health, care and maintenance. For this we organize workshops at two venues, one in BHEL area and another in Government Rose Garden. With the help of senior rosarians we are trying to educate and at the same time solve their problems. A large number of rose lovers attend these workshops.



This year, 16 members of Madhya Pradesh Rose Society participated in the 40th Conference and Rose Flower Exhibition of Indian Rose Federation held in Bhubaneswar, Orissa from 05th to 07th January 2024. In this conference, the ex-President of the society, Mr S.S. Gadre, gave presentation on organising 21st World Rose Conference and Show to be held at Bhopal in January 2028. In the presentation all details of the show were given.

43rd All India Rose Show was held on 12th, 13th & 14th of January 2024 at Government Rose Garden Bhopal. This was organised by M.P. Rose Society in collaboration with Horticulture Department of Madhya Pradesh.

On 12th January, 'Roses in Pots' were received. These were collected from Govt./Semi Govt. institutions and private gardens. For transport the Society provided Trucks along with workers to transport the pots to the venue. Around 500 pots were received. Some pots were also received with cinders and without soil. They were judged by the senior members of the Society.

On 13th January, cut flowers were received in the morning from 9.00 AM to 12.00 Noon. A large number of rose lovers brought their cut roses not only from Bhopal but from all over the state of Madhya Pradesh. In addition, flowers were also put up by commercial cultivators of the state. There were different categories and so bottles were segregated and arranged so that the judging could be easier. Flower arrangements were also done by amateurs. Judging was done again by senior members of the Society. King, Queen, Prince & Princess were selected by the International judge Mrs. Rosario Algorta from Uruguay who had specially arrived earlier. WFRS Vice president of South America, Mrs. Ines Diaz de Licandro, Mr. Sven Osen from Sweden and Mrs. Claudia Hacker from Germany also visited the show to judge suitability of facilities to hold a World Rose Convention. They were also shown our proposed Convention Centre, and they were happy to see all the arrangements.

The Show was inaugurated by Mr. Narayan Singh Kushvaha, Minister Horticulture, Government of Madhya Pradesh in the afternoon at 4.00 PM. He also addressed the gathering and distributed trophies to the winners.

On 14th of January, the Show was open for common visitors from 10.00 AM to 9.00 PM. A large number of rose lovers visited the show and purchased plants and hand tools for which a number of stalls were put up. In the evening Mr. Rameshwar Sharma, member of Legislative Assembly distributed prizes to the winners of cut flowers and flower arrangements. He also distributed prizes to commercial cultivators who had also put up their flowers for competition.

Mr. Sushil Prakash and Mrs. Dipa Prakash visited the Chelsea Flower show in London in May '24.

Our Past President and Treasurer of WFRS, Shri Sushil Prakash was invited for Judging of Trial Gardens at various places in Europe. On 15th June '24, he visited Nyon, in Switzerland 18th June he visited Baden Baden in Germany, on 19th June he was at Saverne and at Bagatelle, France, on 20th and at Kortrijk, Belgium on 21st of June. He was the President of the Jury in Nyon. Mr Prakash is the first Indian rosarian who was invited for judging of so many gardens in a calendar year.

Mr. Sushil Prakash, Dipa Prakash and Prema Prakash visited Sweden to attend WFRS Regional Conference where he also delivered a Lecture on "Roses in Aspirational Year" and also promoted the World Rose Convention in Bhopal. On 25th August 2024, the annual general meeting of Madhya Pradesh Rose Society and the elections of the new executive members were held for the year 2024-26.

The following members were elected

President	: Mr. S.S. Gadre
Vice President	: Mr P.R. Gawade Mr Rajesh Raikwar
Honorary Secretary	: Mr Avinash Galande
Treasurer	: Mr Shailesh Agarwal
Joint Secretary	: Ms. Prema Prakash



Vidarbha Rose Society, Nagpur

Reg. No. 82/86 & F- 5711 (Nagpur)
Correspondence Address:- Dr. A. S. Sable, Flat No. A-11/3,
N.S.K. Housing Soc. Ravi Nagar, Nagpur-440001

Date: _____

ANNUAL REPORT OF VIDARBHA ROSE SOCIETY **NAGPUR 2023 - 2024**

The Society organizes various activities regarding Gardening, Rose Culture, Commercial flower growing for farmers by Organising Lectures, Field Visit, Workshop, seminars etc. 36th Annual Rose show was organized on 14th January 2024 at Maharana Pratap Smriti Mandir, Shankar Nagar, Nagpur in the memory of Late Shri Rani Hanuman Singh.

The show was inaugurated by Dr. Puja Pathak Principal L.A.D. College and Smt. R. P. College, Nagpur and function was presided by Mr. Vinaykumar Saraswar. The show was excellently organized by the organizers as large number of participants participated in the show.

In the show King of Roses - Var. Cabaret, Prince of Roses Var. Naga Belli, Princes of Roses Var. Sadabhar (Fluri) awarded to Mr. Musundhare and Queen of Roses - Var. Black Tea awarded to Mrs. Hassan. Maximum Prizes secured in the over all show show in the Rose by Mrs. Hassan.

The team of Vidarbha Rose Society attended All India Rose convention held at Bhubneshwar and Participated in Rose show and secured prizes.

The executive committee of the Rose society comprises of following members, President Mrs. Sanyogeeeta Devi Dhanwatay Vice President, Dr. Poovali valdiya and Shri Sanjay Daniwade, Secretary Dr. Arvind Sable, Jr. Secretary - Mrs. Aruna Babhulkar & Mr. M. D. Meshram, Executive Members - Mr. M. B. Wadke Mr. B. K. Agrawal, Mr. Vilas Salpekar Mr. Kamal Mehadia, Mr. Dilip Ingole, C. G. Itkolwar, Shri R. M. Thakur, Shri Sharadchandra Pat

Dr. Arvind Sable
Secretary

World Rose Convention : 2028 (Bhopal)



MP Rose Society (MPRS) is one of the most vibrant and active societies in India, which has been entrusted to hold the World Rose Convention in 2028 in the city of Bhopal by World Federation of Rose Societies (WFRS), and it is looking forward to holding this prestigious event for the first time in India.

Our country till today had three WFRS Regional Conventions in Jaipur, Hyderabad and Kolkata, but the World Rose Convention, held every three years is the most prestigious event in the World of Roses. As more than 500 persons will congregate in our beautiful city of

Lakes, MPRS will leave no stone unturned to make it a memorable occasion. It will also bring to the fore the topic of a Resurgent India, an Aspirational India, ready to showcase its growing stature on the world stage.

The city and its gardens are already gearing up for the event. An apex body has been formed with Mr. Sushil Prakash as the president of the Organizing Committee. Under his able leadership, a team has already started working towards planning and executing this grand event.

There have been several meetings of MPRS members with Principal Secretary (Tourism), Horticulture Director, Commissioner Nagar Nigam, Director Airport Authority of India, Bhopal and various stakeholders and key persons of the city, in order to start preparations early.

There is a lot of excitement and a sense of responsibility in all involved.

Three gardens have already signed a Memorandum of Understanding with MP Rose Society for making them world class by changing all the rose plants and MP

Rose Society is providing them with selected rose varieties, layout planning and consultation for the next 4 years with a team of dedicated rosarians

The society is discussing with Airports Authority, Bhopal, and a few other gardens to have an understanding to develop their rose garden Mr Sushil Prakash, Dipa Prakash and Prerna Prakash visited Sweden in June '24 to attend WFRS Regional Conference and promoted the World Rose Convention in India

There will be visits of top officials of WFRS to check the preparedness and the next rose show will have visitors from abroad The show is planned from 10th to 12th January 2025

The chief patron of the society—The Governor of MP, Shri Mangubhai Patel has already been informed of all the ongoing activities and the society has his blessing and guidance

A large contingent from Bhopal will also participate in the World Rose Convention in Fukuyama, Japan They will present the next convention in Bhopal and have a booth showcasing various travel possibilities, pre & post tours. Jehan Numa Group of hotels will be the convention hotel and our partners



Indian Rose Annual Vol 3, 1983

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4th ALL INDIA ROSE CONVENTION HELD AT PUNE ON JANUARY 14, 15 & 16 1983.

A Short Account

Brahm Datt, Nagpur

A group of four friendly rosarians including myself but not as a group leader left Nagpur on 13th at 11.45 a.m. by train for Pune in the State of Maharashtra to attend the Convention which was hosted by The Maharashtra Rose Society. Many rose lovers, including VIPs in different fields of rose growing attended. They were warmly welcomed and well looked after by the Chairman Shrimati Suman Kulkarni and other members of the Reception Committee. The venue for the Convention was the well known 'Tilak Smarak Mandir', Tilak Road, Pune, (with decent sitting arrangements are well lighted stage), tastefully built in memory of country's great Patriot & Philosopher late Shri Bal Gangadhar Tilak the author of 'Gita Rahasya'—his brilliant commentary and modern interpretation of the great Hindu epic 'The Gita'.

The schedule was a bit heavy for the time available for the proceedings.

Some of the interesting topics covered were: —

1. Rose Breeding — Some Thoughts & Experiences by Dr. B.P. Pal, New Delhi
2. New Approaches to Rose Breeding — The Anisumi papers by M.S. Viraraghavan, Kodaikanal
3. Some Views for you - Genetics & Rosa by Pawan Kumar Singhania (Member RHA, Calcutta).
4. Mutation Breeding in Roses by U.S. Kacker, New Delhi
5. Improved propagation techniques for Roses in Tropics by R.L. Bhatt & B.S. Chundawat, Navsari (Gujarat)
6. (a) 'Cut Flower' Varieties of Roses for Home and Export Market, (b) Holding World Rose Convention in 1991 in India by P.L. Mokashi, Bombay
7. Rose Growing for Rose Oil by Br. Jendra Singh and R.S. Malik, New Delhi.
8. Fragrance in Roses by V.S. Padhye, Bombay.
9. Pruning of Roses (Semi Tropical Areas), by Lt. Col. C.P. Didd, Jabalpur

WHITHER GOES THE ROSE? — VISTAS IN ROSE HYBRIDISATION

By M.S. Viraraghavan, Kodai Kanal

The rose is and has been for centuries the world's favourite flower. History, and symbolism, colour and fragrance, and sheer elegance of form—whether the classic beauty of the single bloom, or the complex perfection of the modern Hybrid Tea—all combine to give the rose its pre-eminent position. Even the thorns have romantic associations!

With all this, it would be a mistake to assume that the rose will always retain its pre-eminence unless there is constant effort to improve and enhance the attractiveness of the rose by imaginative hybridisation. The keyword is really 'imaginative'—and that is where amateur rose hybridisation will have to play a dominant role—much more so than it has done in the past. The warning signs—the limitations of commercial rose hybridisation—are already evident. One has only to leaf through the new rose catalogues to realize that the flood of new HT's, Floribundas, and other standard types pouring out from the big rose growers, are not really particular 'improvements' on the standards attained in the past. These 'improvements' will not contribute to the future of the rose. In fact, they are only evidence of increasing, and potentially disastrous, economic pressures—to produce something new every year so as to continue in the race. On the other hand, the future of the rose is, and will become increasingly more dependent on amateur rose hybridisation, backed up by the support of rose societies throughout the world.

Does not this last statement place an excessive emphasis on amateur rose breeding, you may well ask? The answer may not be very clear in India, where the popularity of the rose is still at the stage of spectacular growth. But the trend in other countries—even in the U.K., which has traditionally been the home of the rose—is not so encouraging. I quote from an article 'Roses and Modern Times' by Jack Harkness (American Rose Magazine, August 1962): 'When I began to breed roses in 1962, it was boom time for roses in Britain. The British nursery trade was budding around 50 million roses, one for every man, woman and child in the country. The Royal National Rose Society was coasting along towards enrolment is 100,000th member. As proof of its confidence in the future, the R.N.R.S. took

12 BEST INDIAN ROSES: A SYMPOSIUM

Introduction: _____ V.S. Padhye, Pune

Contributors _____ Lt. Col. C.P. Dodi (Retd.), Jabalpur (M.P.)

V.S. Padhye, Pune, Maharashtra

Dr. B.P. Pal, New Delhi

Arvind Sable, Akola, Maharashtra

M.S. Viraraghavan, Kodakanal, Tamil Nadu

Introduction:

Rosarians from all over India were invited to write about a selection of best Indian rose varieties which they have grown/seen growing. The objective of this assessment was to prepare a list of Indian roses which would do well in all parts of the country. Results of the survey are recorded below.

The survey suffers from two drawbacks.

1. Only five rosarians out of 20 who were requested to participate have responded. A larger participation would have made the selection a better representative of the merits of good varieties.
2. The experience of most of the contributors except perhaps Dr. Pal is limited to growing a relatively less number of Indian rose varieties. This is primarily because of non availability of most of the varieties for various reasons. Hence many good varieties might have been left out.

Nevertheless choice of Banjara, Delhi Princess, Mrinalini, Dr. Homi Bhabha, Neelambari, Raja of Nalagarh, Raja Ram Mohan Roy, La Bahadur Shastri, Manu Mukherji, Smt. Vasa Jawahar, Bhim, City of Panjim, Rampa Pal etc. as the higher rated varieties would be appreciated by the rosarians who have grown Indian roses for some years.

There are two hybridizers whose efforts need special mention as they have not appeared in the symposium. Dr. M.N. Hardkar is a painstaking and very successful breeder who has produced among many others the varieties Swami & First Rose Convention. His latest Flying Tata a deep pink (bordering on red) is very outstanding. Dr. Y.K. Hande a relatively new entrant into this field has described 5 of

11. There were no Bouquets, Garlands etc. in any on the convention functions
12. There was no dias and no V.I.P. dais-chairs
13. I enquired at many nursery shops at Baden-Baden regarding selling price of rose plants (Most of the plants were potted in 5" to 6" dia. plastic pots) the price for sale was DM 9. However the shops purchase the plants from the suppliers at DM 2 only.

HENCE THERE APPEARS TO BE NO CHANCE FOR LUCRATIVE ROSE PLANT EXPORTS FROM INDIA.

ROSES FOR PERFUMERY INDUSTRY - *ROSA DAMASCENA*

H.P.Srivastava & M.N.Gupta,

National Botanical Research Institute, Lucknow.

Like the love of music, books or pictures, the love for perfume comes with culture and leisure. Perfumes give freshness to breath and impart fragrance to surroundings.

Rose is one of the best sources of perfume. There are more than two hundred species of the genus *Rosa* of the botanical family Rosaceae. It is the genus of erect, sarmentose or climbing shrubs having mostly prickly stems with red, white, pink or yellow flowers. *Rosa* species grow wild in several regions of the world and most of them are of ornamental value. Nine species of *Rosa* are found in India. A few of them are fragrant and rich in oil content.

The commonly grown rose species for perfume are, *Rosa damascena* Mill., *Rosa borboniana* Desp., *Rosa centifolia* L. and *Rosa leptiz*. In India *Rosa damascena* (Damask rose) and *Rosa borboniana* (Edward rose) are cultivated for perfume.

A survey of rose growing in India was carried out under a scheme of the Essential oils Research Committee (Narainswamy & Biswas, 1957). The Survey mainly dealt with the rose growing areas of Damask rose, Edward rose and other roses for perfume. Under a scheme of the development of rose oil industry in India, three species of roses viz. *R. damascena*, *R. borboniana* and *R. leptiz* were grown at H.B.T.I., Kanpur in 1954. The flowers of these species were examined for the oil content by water and steam distillation as well as by solvent extraction using Benzene as solvent. Fasil rose (*R. damascena*) gave the maximum yield on distillation (0.15 - 0.18%)

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Wishing the Delegates a very

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Mr. Megh Baran Guin

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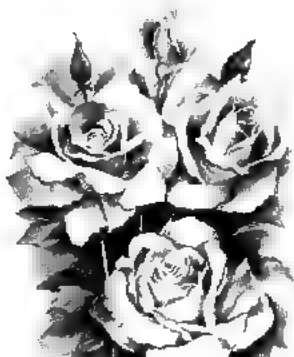
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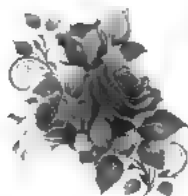
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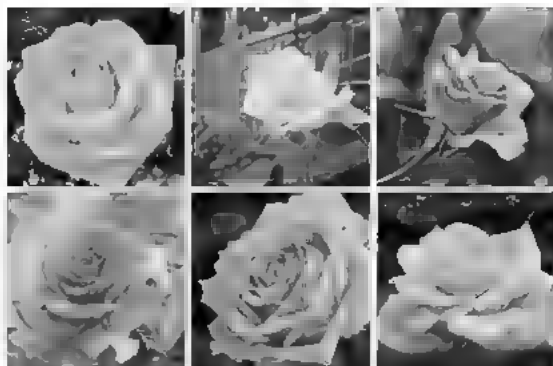
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Wishing all Rosarians a very

*Happy
New Year
2025*



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Wishing the Delegates & The Organizers
A Successful Convention
A Very Happy, Healthy, Rosy*

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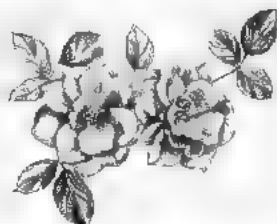
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